

Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon

*Lessons Learned and
the Uncertain Future*



Edited by
PAUL NCHOJI NKWI
and
FRANCIS B. NYAMNJOH

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Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon:

Lessons Learned and the Uncertain Future

Editors

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&
Francis B. Nyamnjuh**



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Finally, we are deeply indebted to Professor Peter Geschiere and Dr. Piet Konings whose untiring efforts to enhance social science research in Cameroon have been exemplary. They have also introduced many Dutch researchers to Cameroon studies thus laying the groundwork for a long and fruitful future.

Foreword

This book is the outcome of a conference held at Yaounde from 13 to 18 'October 1995, organized by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Yaounde I and the African Studies Centre at Leiden. The conference was made possible by the highly appreciated financial support of African Studies Centre and the Dutch Embassy at Yaounde. We greatly enjoyed participating in the organization of this conference together with the dynamic local team consisting of Paul Nchoji Nkwi, Flavien Ndonko, Antoine Socpa and Flora Asah.

The conference took place within the framework of the Protocol Agreement of Cooperation in Scientific Matters between the rest while General Delegation of Scientific and Technical Research (DGRST) and the African Studies Centre signed on 7 December 1983. Research cooperation between these two institutions was channelled through the Institute of Human Sciences (ISH) at Yaounde which, regrettably, was dissolved during the economic crisis. A first conference was held at Leiden in June 1988. The Leiden conference eventually resulted in the publication of a two-volume Proceedings (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1989) and a special volume entitled *itineraires d'accumulation au Cameroun* (Paris: Karthala, 1993), exploring the rich regional variations in modes of accumulation in Cameroon.

The 1995 conference fulfilled the wish expressed by the participants in the successful Leiden conference to hold a follow-up conference in Cameroon. Moreover, it enabled Cameroonian and Dutch researchers to present the results of a decade of research cooperation. It also offered an opportunity to some French and English colleagues within the network of Cameroon studies to share their research findings.

The theme chosen for the Yaounde conference '*Regional Balance and National Integration: Lessons learnt and the future*' met an enthusiastic response, manifest in the large number of papers presented during the conference. This was not altogether surprising. The conference theme has continued to be particularly relevant to the Cameroonian situation, even acquiring new urgency in the aftermath of recent economic and political changes. The conference offered an occasion, unfortunately quite rare in the country, to Cameroonian participants to ventilate their opinions on this 'sensitive' subject. The growing regional tensions in Cameroon were clearly reflected in the vivid, and sometimes heated, discussions during the conference. These discussions brought to the fore the current vehement conflicts not only

between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon, but also between and within various regions in Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon, e.g. between South Westerners and North Westerners in Anglophone Cameroon and between Fulbe and non-Fulbe in the North of Francophone Cameroon.

The introduction to this book highlights the large range of topics dealt with during the conference. It would be an illusion to expect a conference like this to come out with clear-cut and ready-made solutions to the complex problem of regionalism. The conference, however, showed the importance of presenting a forum for the exchange of scientific ideas on this highly urgent issue. It also identified a number of themes for future research summed up in the introduction to this book. We do hope that this research agenda will inspire further successful follow-up conferences. We greatly enjoyed to participating in the conference.

Peter Geschiere
Piet Konings

Chapter One

Introduction: Cameroon Regional Balance Policy and National Integration: Food for an Uncertain Future

Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Francis B. Nyamnjoh

This book presents a series of reflections by Cameroon scholars on a variety of topic associated with regional balance and national integration. The different reflections look for answers to some burning questions of the day. Questions such as: Where are we coming from? Where are we going? How are we going where we are going? Have the different stat ideologies offered appropriate solutions to the quest for a strong, united, stable and prosperous nation? If not, what went wrong and why? What can be done to shape the future and accommodate the aspirations of the men and women of Cameroon and of their progeny?

The book addresses the issue of national unity and national integration within the context of different political perceptions and visions. It examines the merits and demerits the policy of regional balance of the Ahidjo years. Focus is also on the underlying flaws of this doctrine and philosophy. The debate goes on to address some critical questions of the 198C and 1990s such as the national integration policy of President Biya which emerged at a time the country itself was at the cross-roads of internal “cogitation” about its very existence. The policy seems to have failed to achieve its stated goals and has ended up in the ethnicisation and polarisation of national life. The future of the Cameroon nation-state, with its rich ethnic and cultural diversity, seems to be in jeopardy as internal forces question the management of civil society by leaders who seem to have lost the sense of justice and equity. Why are there several voices singing the song of destitution and Anglophone separatism? Have province and regions emerged as untenable polities within a nation-state in search of an identity These are some of the questions and issues Cameroon scholars and some foreign have tried to address in this collection of essays.

The importance of these issues has been highlighted by the current debate on the nature and future of the Cameroon nation-state. Ever since 1990, the winds of democratisation have changed the political landscape and ethics in Cameroon. Beginning w1l a strong resistance to democratic change,

faithful ('dimabola')¹ of the one-party state fought against the tides and finally capitulated, opening up the window of change for some politic fresh air to renew the stench, corruption, fraudulence and malpractices of an entrance disheartening system. The public demonstrations in the 1990s against the democratisation (public life was nothing more than an attempt by the "profiteers" of the system to maintain control over the dwindling resources of the state. When the business community in Cameroon called for early elections, its intention was to breathe new air into the economy, regenerate confidence in the system and relaunch the economic activities of the nation, but lo and behold, the leadership and the entire system showed its inability to deal with the exigencies of a changing Cameroon. This has cast doubts on the ability of managers of the society to provide a re-assuring dream to all Cameroonians.

The future of Cameroon as a united political entity seems bleak and uncertain but will depend on the level and quality of dialogue between the different forces at play, conducted in an atmosphere of openness all in effort to produce an acceptable political construct. The refusal to dialogue by some forces in Cameroon highlights the fear to debate the very basis of the fragile state of an artificial nation whose very nature has posed serious problems to managers of the colonial and postcolonial state. The failure of the tripartite and constitutional conferences to produce an acceptable model reaffirms the need for an open, free and fair debate by all the sons and daughters of this beautiful country of ours.

The signing of instruments of protection (schutzgeblet) in 1884 by the Douala chiefs only bound those who signed the pact, and not the other "sovereigns" of Cameroon precolonial states who were neither consulted nor informed. The renegotiation of the treaty in different parts of the country was an open admission of the sovereignty of such states over the geographical space they controlled (cf. Rudin H.P. 1968, Nkwi, and P.N. 1989). Even acephalous and egalitarian groups energetically banded together and fought a common enemy despite their jealous respect of [the] autonomy over their respective territories. Cameroonians came to accept a situation or a

¹ In 1990 an anti-democratic match was organized in the South West Province and this was lead by leading politicians and government minister singing a song entitled "dimabola". The match was organized to support calls for the maintenance of the one-party system

nation which was never freely negotiated by the partners who, today, are questioning its very existence.

Although the French and British maintained their hegemony over their respective portions of the former German “schutzgebiet”, the consultation process of people was hardly ever raised. No referendum was ever organised to seek people’s opinion as to whether they wanted to remain a single political entity. After all, the colonial administrators served as referees among ethnic groups that were once arch enemies. The enculturative process of an imported culture was expected to bring citizens of once hostile pre-colonial states together into a fragile nation. With the achievement of political independence, the political leadership remained as their master’s voice, especially in Francophone Cameroon, and continued to protect the interest of the “neo-colonialists”. Although Ahidjo understood the dangers involved in marginalising powerful ethnic groups, his ruthless measures in dealing with dissension and assertions for autonomy drove many Cameroonians, thirsty for freedom and liberty, to either flee or go underground by serving him faithfully² and sheepishly. Ahidjo personally supervised his regional balance policy and ensured that those who were against it were either eliminated physically or neutralised politically. The decision to establish the United Republic of Cameroon replacing the Federal Republic could only take place after the removal of John Ngu Foncha as Vice President of the Republic. Foncha’s naiveté failed to discover the conspiracy and to arrest the Fomuban Accord from collapsing. Like Biya, Tandeng Muna submerged his opposition to the idea for fear of his life; some decades later Foncha and Muna have come to question the very actions of Ahidjo. Where were they at the time? Is it the democratic Change that has given them a voice to speak out today for a more federal vocation of the Cameroon nation-state?

Biya’s national integration policy has turned out to be an empty concept which has further demonstrated the necessity for a revisit of the federal structures of the 1960s. The constitution promulgated on January 18, 1996, acknowledges and enshrines ethnicity into its pages. The policy of national integration which originally was designed in the 1980s to give Cameroonians

² President Biya served Ahidjo so faithfully, earning himself the title and rights of prince-heritler. Biya was a docile and non-controversial character whose personality attracted confidence and trust.

a feeling of belonging wherever they are in the republic, has, in practice, been replaced by ethnicisation of politics. Cameroonians have been made to believe that they do not belong, in reality, to any such thing called Cameroon, but only to the ethnic groups into which they were born, or where they are alleged to have come from administratively and ethnically. If a Fulbe is born and bred in Yaounde, he should not aspire to be mayor of Yaounde, because his ethnic group is localised in the Northern province. No Bulu or Bassa born in Bamenda can aspire to political office in that city because he is of an ethnic group whose territorial space is in the South Province. Contrary to the “national integration” policy of Biya (*cf.* Biya, 1987), corrupted in practice by the politicisation of ethnicity, Honourable Betow, born in Tiko of Bassa ethnic group should never have ran for elections in Tiko sub-division, and having succeeded into parliament all the same, was right in fighting for a Bassa Province instead of articulating the concerns of his Tiko electorate. Gregoire Owona who ran for election in Douala should never have done so because his ethnic Ewondo group is found in the Centre Province. Tanke Hassan, of Fulbe ethnic group, should never have been mayor in one of Douala’s neighbourhoods. Ethnicity as the glorification of one and one’s ethnic group and the devaluation of others and theirs (Nnoli, 1980:2), has been used to procure undue political advantages and a false sense of security in Cameroon (Tangwa, 1994). The power elite has not only politicised ethnicity effectively (*cf.* Le Cameroun Eclate (ed.) 1994; Mbuyinga, 1989; Kago Lele, 1995), but has even gone to the extent of engraving ethnicity into the constitution through the trivialisation of the whole concept of minorities (*cf.* Official Gazette, *Special Constitution*, 30 January 1996).

It is now evident that the 1990s offer the best options and opportunities for Cameroonians to renegotiate their future. The democratic process has permitted them to speak out on how they feel about the past, the present and the future. A system of an open dialogue would offer all the sons and daughters of Cameroon the opportunity to sit down and put into place structures that will satisfy the aspirations of the people. The Cameroon Anglophone movement (CAM) and the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) have proposed some strategies and mechanisms that would permit the forging of acceptable structure for the nation. Their hand of fellowship has been met with abject indifference. These movements have built a strong following and credibility and therefore have emerged ever stronger as a result of the intransigence and arrogance of a regime which has

turned a deaf ear to cries for social justice and equity. Those in power must not be blind to the fact that the end must come one day and past excesses paid for. When the demise of Ahidjo came, little did one expect that his Fulbe constituency and his policies would be held in contempt by faithful who had abhorred and despised him yet used him to gain prominence. Many Cameroonians want real change or an occasion to discuss and build a future. The various papers in this volume represent different perceptions of this picture.

Intellectuals Speak Out

Tatah Mentan argues that there is little evidence of national integration in Cameroon. If anything, the forces of domination and exploitation have actively worked in favour of national “unintegration” and disintegration. Thus, his conclusion that, for social and political policies to be of service to the people, the multi-party system should be able to deal with rising expectations, transcend multi-communalism as the basis of politics and confront the problematics of economic dependence and underdevelopment. There is need to reorder the processes of class formation and class consolidation in the interest of the disaffected.

Chiabi views regional balance and national integration as a Herculean task, given Cameroon’s enormous geographic, cultural, linguistic, political and religious diversity. Such factors cannot be ignored if the noble objective of making Cameroon a just and fair nation is to be achieved. In order to make headway, he argues that Cameroonians must have a clear idea of the type of integration and balance they want. While acknowledging the difficulties in redressing natural imbalances, Chiabi argues that artificially-created imbalances, especially those inherited from the colonial period, have been compounded by new inventions in the post-colonial state.

Schilder asserts that the Ahidjo and Biya regimes stressed the centralisation of power, but their approaches to state affairs marginalised the common man by ignoring him in the decision making process. The Social Democratic Front’s motto: “Power to the People”, was recognition of such a failure. While Ahidjo’s patronage system sought the allegiance of the political elite by using them at the top level of the state apparatus, he attempted to achieve a certain measure of proportionality in order to harness regional and ethnic tension. Ahidjo’s policy of regional balance established a “country-

wide coalition of political forces, which in combination with the use of repressive means accounts for the remarkable stability of the Ahidjo regime during the 1960s and 1970s. The strong centre, the Capital controlled the regions, the provinces". The fundamental flaw of the policy was that provinces were well-defined political units and that such boundaries corresponded to major political cleavages. Ahidjo ignored the internal regional tensions, but left the political elite from those regions to deal with that, and when they failed, he simply fired them. Ahidjo ignored the non-Islamic ethnic groups of the big North and relied on his Islamic and Islamized ethnic groups. He was supported by the Moslems. Biya brought non-Islamic northern politicians to participate in the national institutions and into the decision-making process. He played on the policy of divide and rule rather than capitalising on nationalistic solidarity. Using his Beti clan, he consolidated power around him and his policy of national integration became an empty concept. Biya politicised ethnicity and has endangered the precarious unity and security of the country.

Ngwasiri shows that the different investment codes elaborated and implemented by Cameroon, have attempted to address the issue of regional balance. Ahidjo's balanced development policy was designed to pay equal attention to different regions by channelling investment. The policy stated that no region or ethnic group should forge too far ahead or lag too far behind the others. The First code was designed to attract investment to develop the regions. Between 1978 and 1984 most of the investments went to industries in the Littoral and Centre-South provinces. The Biya investment code of 1990 discards or ignores the balanced development ideology, and the term is not even mentioned in the new code. The code encourages and promotes productive investment and the exploitation of natural resources. After 30 years of using the law as a tool for balanced development, the centralisation patronage system has failed to achieve it.

Courade believes that previous regimes have failed to produce an acceptable policy that brings the nation together, and that there is need for a new kind of state which has to address the question of national integration in a more creative and constructive way than harping on a hollow concept. Cameroon cannot move forward unless it redefines its functions and its exercise of power, and imposes an itinerary acceptable to all. The future of Cameroon is placed in parenthesis.

Amin Ajab asserts that Cameroon missed an opportunity to use the

windfall from high agricultural and petroleum production in the 1970s and mid-1980s to redress regional and ethnic imbalance. The ruling elite failed to recognise regional and ethnic issues and to tackle them appropriately. If the government failed to act when the economic performance was good and revenues abundant, what chances are there that regional imbalances will be corrected .and national integration achieved in a period of economic decline and political Changes that have seriously weakened government's manoeuvrability?

Nantang Jua rightly shows that failure to understand meaning can lead to disastrous consequences. Using the concept of chiefs, he argues that the political elite confers the wrong meaning and significance to a concept that is basically moral, religious and mythical, and sees the chiefs systematically defeated at the polls within the current multiparty context. The state manipulates traditional authority so as to convert chiefs into clients capable, in turn, of legitimating state action and contradictions; their financial needs have turned them into political beggars and once honoured can now be treated shabbily by the political elite and by their own disaffected subjects. Traditional rulers are no longer sacrosanct in their powers, as they are subject to the same deficits of legitimacy suffered by those who manipulate them for support.

Nyamnjoh observes that at independence, the media, in view of their enormous potential as magic multipliers of development information, were seen to be of special importance in the process of nation-building in Cameroon. Journalists were assigned the role of using their talents and the media to facilitate government's task of explaining its policies to the population with the aim of mobilizing the latter to participate fully in forging national unity and in bringing about development. Today, after about 40 years (at it,) journalists in general Anglophone journalists in particular are disillusioned. It has dawned on them that they have actively worked to strengthen state authority while weakening the bonds of nationhood in Cameroonians. In the face of this, Anglophone journalists have not reacted in the same way. While some have chosen to continue in support of the forces of Anglophone alienation, others have decided to use their talents in the service of the liberation of their community, the peoples of Southern Cameroon. He examines the place of Anglophone journalists in Anglophone renaissance in the face of the failure of post-Foumban governments in Cameroon to build a viable nation-state of Anglophones and Francophones.

Using the 'Agro-industry' in the South-West Province, Konings argues that "the economic and political crisis in Cameroon has reinforced existing regional sentiments among the South West elite." These sentiments are, however, ambivalent in that the elite show solidarity with other Anglophones in relation to pooling their efforts to protect their Anglo-Saxon heritage from annihilation by the Francophone-dominated state, but at the same time do not hesitate to show "fears of renewed North West domination" when it comes to "establishing control over economic resources in the South West." This instinctive inclination to adopt a South West identity on this issue notwithstanding, Konings argues that "With the exception of those who continue to be co-opted in the 'hegemonic alliance' of private gains, the Anglophone elite has become increasingly aware of the importance of common struggles against the Francophone dominated state." He expresses fear that the "arrogance and clumsiness" of the Biya regime over the Anglophone predicament, coupled with the regime's increasing resort to repression, "could lead to an escalation of Anglophone demands past a point of no return."

Bame Nsamenang is critical of current national policies and practices which tend to present cultural pluralism as a problem rather than a national asset to be harnessed. Thus, his argument that any meaningful and lasting integration must use the different cultural heritages of Cameroon as its springboard. His paper presents a critical sketch of Cameroon's multiculturalism, examines the psycho-cultural bases of the integration process, and suggests how multiculturalism in Cameroon could be managed for purposes of integration. He maintains that for any solutions to problems of cultural diversity to be long-lasting, these must be "found by the people themselves within the frameworks of liberal democracy, political fairplay and participative governance."

Chem-Langee argues that the political re-unification of Southern Cameroons and Cameroun was fraught with problems of integration right from the beginning. The fact that there was no common consciousness of a Kamerun instilled by German colonialism meant that any suggestion of feelings of nationhood pushing Anglophones and Francophones to reunite, was "a myth to which very few people attached any importance." Also, the fact that the physical gap between southern Cameroons and Francophone Cameroon was of a ratio of 1 :8, meant that Anglophones were going to be "very sensitive not only to their minority position but also to acts, behaviour

and pronouncements” of Francophones and their leaders, “judged or perceived to be prejudicial to their interests and honour.” He equally argues that Anglophones went in for a union on the understanding that this ‘would be a confederation bordering on the commonwealth formula of an enduring association of like-minded states.’ It is therefore no surprise to Chem-Langee that the union has resulted in little more than a catalogue of grievances by the Anglophones against Francophone attitudes, behaviour and insensitivities. He argues that if little is done to curb Anglophone disaffection, nothing would stop the union from political disintegration.

Within the framework of a democratising Cameroon, Yenshu explores the direction rural development will take when regional autonomy becomes reality. His argument is that current democratisation efforts augur well for regional alternatives to centre-down approaches. However, for such regional efforts to be viable, he argues, “the state will still have to play a prominent role in planning, assisting and hence redressing inequalities between the regions.” He arrives at this conclusion by evaluating past attempts at local empowerment, the role of the state in creating regional awareness, and the impact of the on-going democratic process.

Fondo Sikod blames Cameroon’s current crisis epitomised by economic collapse, political and social discord, largely on the government’s inability “to appropriately reallocate the resources of the nation in a way to achieve national integration and sustained economic growth.” He criticises the failure by presidents Ahidjo and Biya to respectively implement their policies of planned and communal liberalism, which were designed in view of attaining national integration through resource reallocation.

According to Tatah Mbuy, the new waves of freedom and clamour for democracy have revived tribalism and regionalism, which he sees essentially as negative influences in African development endeavour. He argues that “too many Cameroonians today think along tribal and regional ‘lines,” and wonders whether it is not “too ambitious” to organise a conference on regional and national integration in a country where the very concepts of national unity and integration are yet to be well-understood by all. He examines the concepts of tribalism, regionalism and development, within the framework of Cameroon’s socio-cultural, political, economic and religious diversity; and shows how regional tensions and ethnic conflicts have been derived from such cleavages. He then suggests resolving these differences through a proper education of consciences, encouraging everyone to think

about the next generation, and build on good African values.

Zambo Belinga examines the policy of regional balance and quota system for different regions and ethnic groups. His paper addresses a series of questions: How successful has the policy been in practice? Has it led to national integration and unity, or has it accentuated the cleavages among Cameroonians instead? What balance sheet can one fill today, when regionalism is occupying a place of prominence on the agenda, with certain communities even threatening to secede? He argues that the policy has failed, because the national consciousness it is expected to develop in the political, administrative, military and intellectual elite, carefully selected and promoted as to ensure regional balance and equity, has not been achieved. Thus, instead of curbing feelings for the tribe, the locality or region among Cameroonians in the civil service and in high office, these sentiments have been exacerbated instead. It is his conviction that this policy was never taken seriously by those charged with its implementation; rather, the policy has been used to exclude and frustrate certain groups by denying them their fair share, while promoting the interests of others.

Arguing along the same lines, but with a focus on national education, Dorothee Kom commends the scrapping of the texts enforcing the policy of quotas and regional balance, with the justification that its implementation has been less than just and fair. The very idea of quotas is a hindrance to national integration. She concludes with a call to Cameroonians to overcome such reductionism as ethnic groups or villages, and work towards unity at a larger scale, where current states are able to unite to form one big African region, inhabited by one people with a common ambition for self-betterment through education without strings.

Nkwi and Socpa highlight the fact that the Biya regime has never had an interest to make Cameroon a truly democratic and integrative society. The active promotion of the creation of parties along ethnic lines diametrically is in opposition to the whole policy of national integration. In a country with over 250 ethnic groups, the existence of over 120 political parties is simply a ploy to deceive the international community while in fact promoting a policy of divide and rule. The authors argue that any genuine and committed statesman would have made a law that permits not more than three parties, in view of fostering integration among Cameroon's diverse ethnic groups.

Gender and Regional Focus

Amin Rebecca Ntongho addresses the issue of the under-representation of women in decision-making at home, in the community and at the national level. She discusses the effects of the weak and low integration of women in Cameroon's policy issues and development efforts, and points out the constraints of poor access to resources by women. 'While recognising that improvement of women's situation would have to be a joint effort by women and the rest of society, Rebecca Amin believes that such improvement can only come about with a change of mentality on the part of both the woman and the man. Women, she argues, "should understand their environment in order to accept and undergo changes." And Cameroonians as a whole must seek to replace current tribal affiliations with new professional associations that cut across primordial bonds, in order to speed the process of national integration and by extension, equal representation and equal access to decision-making for all, regardless of sex and origin.

Niger-Thomas looks at the economic dimension of regionalism, and argues that as the state becomes less attractive as a centrifugal pillar, regional consciousness has reinforced associational sisterhood. Many women self-help groups have taken the initiative to bring about grassroots development with or without the support of the state. Her case in point is the Manyu Women's Self-Reliance Foodstuff Co-operative Association, which owes its existence to the failure of centralised development, to the weakening of the state, and to the *effects* of the Structural Adjustment Programme. She argues that regional empowerment stands a better chance for national integration, not only because it meets the aspirations of the regions, but also because "it gives room for groups to express their ideas fully, and to develop the region with a particular concern."

Some Empirical and Regional Issues

Focusing on the Centre Province, referred to as privileged, Bersgma argues that the decline of cocoa prices in the 1980s and the pursuit of structural adjustment policies within the framework of the economic crisis, had a catastrophic impact on the economy of households; and although the commercialisation of food crops could have improved the household income, serious constraints such as transportation difficulties, poor market

facilities, and fluctuating demand, exasperated the situation. Although cocoa cultivation has become once more profitable following the devaluation of the F.CFA in January 1994, Bersgma asserts that only a more sustainable commercialisation policy for food-crops would ensure a regular source of income in certain regions of the Centre Province.

Equally writing on the Centre Province, de Jong and Harts-Broekhuis examine the manifold relations between rural and urban areas, and discuss some of the changes brought to bear on these by the economic crisis. They note, for instance, the fact that people of urban incomes have been pushed by the crisis to return to their rural origins and take up cultivation activities, while rural people with non-agricultural incomes are becoming more and more involved in agricultural production. The 1994 devaluation of the FCFA together with a conjunctural rise in world market prices for cocoa, have transformed, in favour of the rural areas, the rural-urban relations which for long were to the disadvantage of the rural areas. However, they argue that investing in rural production should be “a systematic and rewarding action” of local people and of government, and not merely “a distress solution for the rural population”. In which case, the government must come up with a policy both for cash crop and food crop production in rural Cameroon.

On issues of land tenure, Mope Simo is critical of the co-existence of traditional and modern systems, which he considers a hindrance to “the adoption of more sustainable agricultural development policies,” and to any “rational natural resources management and exploitation arrangements.” He attributes farmer-grazer conflicts in the Western Grassfields to “the expanding populations of humans and cattle beyond the carrying capacity of the surrounding grasslands, afro-montane forest and low-lying foothills.” Other conflicts over land in the region, he explains with the ambitions and territorial expansionism of some politicians and traditional rulers. Difficulties of land acquisition in this region, have given rise to intra- and inter-ethnic disputes; “a situation that threatens the very basis of civil society, change and development,” and that compounds the difficulties of national integration.

In her paper, van den Berg poses the question whether regionalism can adequately resolve current land insecurity problems for Giziga women in the Far North. She observes that “competition and power struggle between the customary and state authorities affect the management of, and access to resources.” Thus her argument is that there is no common basis for regionalism exists in the Far North, because of scarce resources and frequent

power conflicts. Nonetheless, she proposes some strategies by which Giziga women could gain access to land within the local land tenure system.

Van Santen discusses the origin of Fulbe domination of the Mafa of the Far North

Province and shows how survival for the Mafa has in the past, meant taking up a Fulbe identity through the process of Islamisation and urbanisation. As an acephalous society without any previous knowledge of a centralised hierarchical political system, the integration of the Mafa into the centralised political systems of the Fulbe, the colonial authorities and post colonial Cameroon, have “been much more of a shock to them than for some other groups.”

Basing his analysis on North Cameroon, Dongmo examines the policy of regional and ethnic balance practised since independence in 1960. A successful implementation of the policy presupposes the partition of the country into acceptable ethnic regions by the central state, with the collusion of local forces with competing interests. An exercise which in practice has created more divergences than it has resolved. His understanding of the phenomenon stretches from the colonial administration (which invented the “*probleme musulman*” in order to keep the North unaffected by the nationalism of the South), through the Ahidjo years to the Biya regime. He is critical of the fact that the immediate post-independence leaders continued with and often reinforced the ethnic cleavages inherited from colonialism, rather than working towards meaningful integration between the various peoples of Cameroon. Administratively, Ahidjo, while keeping the North united and encouraging further integration among northerners during his presidency accelerated the break-up of the southern region into even smaller units. On his part, Biya broke the North down into three administrative provinces, thus bringing back to life in that part of the country regionalism and the competition for power and scarce resources. These divide-and-rule tactics of successive administrations along ethnic lines have exasperated ethnicity and tribalism among Cameroonians. It has made Cameroonians conscious, in a very conjunctural sort of way, that they cannot belong at home anywhere in Cameroon, other than where they were born, or where they are alleged to have come from administratively and ethnically. Dongmo warns against such myopia: “*L’ethnicité engendre les concepts d’autochtones et d’alloènes qui font oublier que tout autochtone d’aujourd’hui est un alloène d’hier, implanté il y a plus ou moins longtemps. Pourquoi certains*

autochtones veulent-ils que l'histoire des migrations s'arrêtent avec leur installation?"

Thierno Bah and Saibou Issa examine inter-ethnic relations, insecurity and prospects for national integration for the communities inhabiting the Lake Chad region of Cameroon. His argument is that national integration will remain an illusion as long as it continues to be articulated and imposed from the centre or from above. For such integration to succeed, attention must be turned to the grassroots which is in dire need of harmonious relations between different ethnic groups. However, recent inter-ethnic conflicts and violence in this region, of Cameroon do not augur well for regional and national integration. Bah and Saibou argue that even the policy of regional balance has remained a myth; its implementation has failed to take into account the real needs of the local communities. The policy has resulted not in solidarity and complementarity, but rather, in antagonism between groups, perpetuated by so-called elites, as they struggle for positions and favours in national politics. Far from diminishing ethnic tensions and Cleavages, the current democratic process has only compounded "L'instrumentalisation astucieuse des clivages a des fins d'alliance politique," as politicians have gone about defending the narrow interests of their immediate groups, with violence as answer to anyone who stands in the way. Such exclusion and violence are certainly not conducive to integration of any kind, regional or national.

Kengne Fodouop examines the role of elite associations in national integration under the Biya regime, and argues that these associations can play an important role in the implementation of the policy of national integration. With active encouragement from government, elite associations have been able to assist in the development of their localities by providing some essential services and resources. They also serve as auxiliaries between government and their regions of origin, explaining policies and decisions, and preparing for visits by members of government and the administration. These associations have understood that in the current context, it is difficult to succeed in business or politics or development, without canvassing for favours or assistance, as a collectivity, from the central government. .

Conclusion

In conclusion a total of thirty five (35) papers were presented at the

conference, but some did not attain the standards to figure in these proceedings. The intellectual and academic exchanges that followed the presentations were frank, rich, exciting and sometimes tense. All papers recognised the regional imbalances created by the colonial experience. However, while some papers highlighted the role played by the post-independence governments in redressing and harnessing these imbalances, others tended to emphasise the Shortcomings of official policies and measures in this direction.

During the conference, there was much debate on how certain concepts such as ethnicity, region, indigene, integration, Anglophone and Francophone were employed in certain papers. There was a call for a re-examination of these concepts whose meanings are often taken for granted. Such critical redefinition can throw more light on the question of regional balance and national integration in Cameroon.

Following the heated exchanges, participants reminded themselves that they were gathered together as scientists, academics and intellectuals and not as social activists. They therefore called for the adoption of a multicultural perspective. Such a scientific approach would avoid a conjunctural view of issues and promote an attitude which interprets history in its relativity. It was recommended that the tendency to assume that one's views are the absolutely accurate ones be avoided. Certain key themes were identified which could serve as orientation for future research. Among these were:

1. Interdisciplinary perspectives on the definition of a region
2. Discourses of conflict and reconciliation
3. Conditions of ethnic identity within a historical perspective
4. Materiality of ethnicity or regional comparisons of ethnicity
5. Resource allocation and the question of regional imbalances
6. The process of democratisation and the involvement of NGOs in regional development
7. Social movements and national integration

It was recommended that the organizing committee explore these and others generated by similar conferences or colloquiums, to come up with a research agenda. Participants regretted the absence of permanent structures for social science research and cooperation, and proposed that the creation of a coordinating structure for social science research, or the re-

establishment of the Institute of Human Sciences (ISH), be seriously considered by government. It was recommended that international collaboration be reinforced and that possibilities be sought for Cameroonian researchers to take advantage of new communication technologies such as the E-mail.

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Chapter Two

The Political Economy of Regional Imbalances and National “Unintegration” In Cameroon

Tatah Mentan

The story of Cameroon is a concrete demonstration of the Biblical verse. “To those who have more shall be given and from those who have not, shall be taken away, even that which they have.” (Matthew 25:29). This is precisely what has been happening in Cameroon. And the consequence of this is regional inequalities, strikes, ethnic conflicts, state terrorism, graft, political patronage, etc. In fact, the political economy of Cameroon is currently undergoing a severe crisis. This crisis is that of regional balance and national integration. How then, is this crisis to be explained? More specifically, what evidences the crisis? What are its links with the past? What reasons have been given for its emergence? What is the validity of these reasons? What other explanations, if any, account for the onset of the crisis as well as its dynamics and consequences? These are not idle questions.

The crisis of regional balance and national integration is the result of the incorporation of Cameroonians into structural relationships of exploitation, conflict, and degradation since the colonial era. This incorporation is, at times, on ethnic, wealth or gender basis. And the result cannot be regarded as national integration, but a repressive containment of violent integration.

Methodology and Theory

Methodologically, unintegrative interactions in Cameroon have historical origins. These origins explain why the country’s past is important for a thorough understanding of its intense, widespread, and disruptive unintegrative present as witnessed by the fraud and violence that accompanied the restoration of multi-party politics in the 1990s. The reason is that the present emerges from the past and, therefore, is given form, character and content by that past (Nnoli, 1981:244-262).

Knowledge of the past is, consequently, important for grasping the causes of the present and, through it, the nature and dynamics of the future. Only by a historical analysis may the present’s link with the past be

established, thereby exposing causality and movement in present and the past, and thus indicating the direction of development of the present into the future. Under these circumstances, the total picture of the present is brought into the full view of the analyst.

It is this failure to capture the relevance of the link between the present and the past that has created' the misleading impression that the present imbalances and national "unintegration", of Cameroon are traceable to the "unintegration" of its component socio-political systems during the pre-colonial times. The implication of this view is that Cameroon "unintegrating" today because its peoples were "unintegrated" in the past, that the contemporary condition of unintegration is a carry-over from the past condition of precolonial "unintegration", That is to say, proponents of this viewpoint suggest that the same conditions which prevailed during precolonial times and presumably accounted for the lack of socio-economic integration of the people at that time have continued to exist and determine the level of integration today.

Often, this viewpoint is left at the level of an assertion with no effort made to verify it. Three obvious questions immediately spring to mind. Is this viewpoint correct? If it is, why is it that after over one hundred years of colonialism and neocolonialism, these conditions have persisted? What forces are reproducing them and why? Theoretically, any worthy explanation of balance or imbalance, integration or "unintegration" must begin with an acceptance that both are social phenomena. By this is meant that it is not a biological condition; that it involves a relationship which cannot be reduced beyond the interaction of two individuals and their physical, biological and human environment. The relation between these individuals as well as the relations between them and the environment including other individuals and societies, affects its form and content.

It is within the context of these relations that the individual must grapple with his physical and biological surroundings and seek to change them for his welfare and that of the other members of his society, and humanity at large.

Historically, the relations among individuals have proved to be the most critical for this transformation of the environment. And the most intimidating and hostile environment has been' subjected to conquest by man, provided that his relations with other men in society are conducive to the production of the means for this conquest.

Precolonial Integrative Interactions

The precolonial societies of Cameroon were never static and isolated systems requiring the dynamics of the colonial system in order to make progress toward integration. Over the past centuries they acquired increasing capacities for dealing with their environment (Chilver et al, 1967:41). Chilver and Kaberry have expressed this succinctly: "The first European travellers to reach the Bamenda Grassfields, who have left a record of their impressions, were struck by the house-building, domestic crafts and manufactures of the area." In the house-building industry, the people harnessed their immediate physical environment communally. Nobody waited for imported European materials to secure shelter for himself and his family. In the majority of cases, mud from the immediate environment was used to build the foundations and walls of their saddle-roofed or pyramid-roofed houses. Dried palm leaves and varieties of grass were used as roofs for these houses. Decorative materials from plants, like carvings, were used. Doors and some of the roofing materials were made of wood and bamboos. Even the semi-permanent rainy season settlements of the nomadic Fulani, were a collection of beehive huts made of light poles and grass. Their temporary houses, acquired during migrations, were conical shelters quickly made of sticks.

Cameroonians practiced a variety of methods of agriculture such as slash-and-burn cultivation and shifting agriculture, rotational fallow, mixed farming, permanent cultivation, tree cultivation, floodland and irrigated farming. Tree cultivation involved the growing of such tree crops as the oil palm, kola, shea, cocoa, coconut, rubber, banana and cotton. "Most of the yields from tree cultivation," Fanso states, "were exchanged in inter-ethnic or distant trade. Floodland and irrigated farming were practiced in the swampy coastal areas, the plains of the Benue, Shari and Logone Rivers, and the Lake Chad basin" (Fanso, 1989:59-60).

In the pre-colonial economies, iron, gold, salt and other minerals were mined locally and used directly in various manufacturing industries. Iron industries existed in various areas, including those in Oku Babungo and Fombran. They serviced other local industries which forged spears and arrows (for hunting and wars), household tools, and tools of husbandry.

In the North, a long-established leather industry was based on the hides of domesticated animals. Many of the resultant leather goods (slippers, handbags) were marketed in notable centres as Sokoto, Kano, Maroua and

Douala. Closely associated with the leather industry was the hides and skins industry which furnished goods for manufacturing drums of all sorts. The various means of communication reflected this self-reliant, integrative and ingenious transformation of the physical environment. For instance, the talking drums made of local wood and animal skins, were used to send messages to distant places on important occasions. The flute was similarly made and used for communicative purposes.

Thrift groups called *njangis* or *esusu*, *ngwa'a*, *tonte*, were organized periodically by members of the same community or village, to aid partners in their social, funeral, marital and building, birth, commitments. At this stage, it was an interest-free banking system. A pioneering area in which precolonial Cameroonians made significant scientific progress was medicine. Fanson (1989:65) captures this vividly thus:

Traditional medicine men in different parts of the territory used herbs, liquid and incantation to treat the various diseases which attacked men, women and children in their communities. They not only treated diseases such as malaria, headache, dysentery and poison, but also ably handled cases of compound fracture, infertility in women and mental diseases. They were able to treat diseases which modern scientific medicine has not been able to cure. In some places, in Oku in Bui Division for example, some traditional healers and witch doctors were known to be able to send and also to control lightning.

By the time of the German colonial conquest, therefore, Cameroonian societies had developed an increased and increasing capacity to extract a living from their physical and biological environments. They had progressed from the hunting and gathering of wild fruits to the domestication of animals and growing of food crops. They had also advanced from the use of crude stone tools to the use of metals, and from the organization of work individually to its organization on a social basis through the integrative participation of many.

In fact, precolonial Cameroonian societies had achieved a very high degree of integration and self-reliance in the use of local human talent and ingenuity to harness local resources to the needs and consumption habits of the population. Even the means of communication reflected the ingenious

transformation of their physical environment. For instance, their talking drums were made of local wood and animal skins. These drums were used to send messages to nearby villages on important occasions. The flute was similarly made and used. The integrative diplomatic interactions of these societies went *pari passu* with 'their self-reliant development. These societies were bound to others in a network of social relations. And there was consciousness on the part of the individual and society of the existence of such fraternal ties (Nkwi, 1987:137-143).

From this consciousness, there resulted a feeling or realization of moral obligations, 'moral imperatives, or prohibitions, and a righteous aversion to the consequences of incorrect, illegal, and unlawful, as well as immoral and indecent conduct and action in inter- and intra-societal relations. Indeed, these societies had made tremendous progress in organizing a complex and sophisticated system of production, social relations and politics reflecting their 'Capacity to deal with their environment. In sum, the productive capacity of Cameroonian societies had arisen from their increased understanding of the laws of nature (science) and the experience acquired by putting these laws into practice by devising tools (technology) for transforming nature. Therefore, there is no doubt that Cameroonian societies had made tremendous progress towards harmonious interactions before the coming of European colonial imperialism.

These interactions, however, never amounted to the integration of ethnic groups. The tendency was either to maintain the sanctity of each group by routing others or capturing and assimilating them completely. The frequent migrations made it difficult to view the groups as stable communities of people with common territory. Hence, the nation-state was an external creation and determination.

“Unintegrative” Underdevelopment: Colonialism

Underdevelopment as a concept expresses a relationship of disruptive exploitation. It may be the exploitation of one class by another domestically or the exploitation of one country by another. The underdevelopment with which Cameroon is now pre-occupied is a product of capitalist exploitation. First of all, slave trade and so-called “legitimate trade” both took a deadly toll on the capacity of Cameroonian peoples to develop a rapid transformation of their social relations and physico-biological environments. Slave raiding and

kidnapping made it rather unsafe to work in farms or to mine or travel. Raiding for captives proved more profitable than agriculture, mining, manufacturing or trading (Fanso, 1998:71-77).

That is labour was sucked away from agriculture and agricultural conditions, and through it societal wealth became uncertain. Slaving removed the able-bodied human agents from whom inventiveness springs and those in areas hard-hit by slave- capturing were preoccupied more with their freedom than improvements in production. Slave trading led to slave wars among the various societies. Such wars caused untold deaths, loss of property, destruction of trust, friendship and co-operation among Cameroonian peoples. Thus, the history of animosity and hostility initiated by slave wars among Cameroonian neighbouring societies culminated in war-damaged economies. And a war-torn economy is usually a victim of underdevelopment, since economic progress demands a high level of political security.

Secondly, “legitimate trade” in non-human resources which followed the slave trade ruined local industries. The circumstances of this trade were not conducive to creating a consistent Cameroonian demand for technology relevant to the transformation of the local environment, since it introduced into the local area only the very limited aspects of its material culture for carting away resources. In fact, these external transactions never penetrated the local economies since they were not integrated into the local trade. The explanation is that the local ruling groups who were the major participants in these trades were not looking for profits which could be reinvested but for certain conspicuous consumption merchandise as guns, alcohol, and fancy cloth for their social prestige and political influence.

For instance, when European traders arrived in Cameroon, liquor was one of the few commodities which met immediately with an African demand. Indeed, liquor was so sought after that it led chiefs along the Cameroonian coast to sign a treaty placing themselves “under the protection” of the Germans rather than the British. According to Ardener (1968:27) the chiefs, having received no correspondence from the British for a lengthy period and being in need of rum and tobacco took their requests to the Germans instead. Rudin (1968:72) confirms that following the 1884 German annexation of the Cameroonian territories, alcohol was used in most trading operations.

Hence, two antagonistic economic systems coexisted within the same

society though situated in spheres impervious to each other. These were the self-reliant and integrative village subsistence economy, on the one hand, and the economy based on international and even transcontinental commerce, on the other hand. For its livelihood, the society depended on the subsistence sector punctuated by local foodstuff markets whose transactions had no direct connection with the external commercial trade serving only the ruling circles. Herein lies one of the fundamental bases of precolonial Cameroonian unintegrative underdevelopment with its attendant regional imbalances.

Thirdly, the incorporation of precolonial Cameroonian societies into the world capitalist economy in a subjugated position caused the destruction of their rich and varied political systems and social structures, and the creation of new productive economic activities based on the needs of the foreign capitalist countries. In addition, they diverted attention away from local creative potentials and resources by focusing on the procurement of slaves or the production of primary resources needed by Europeans. Again, as in Southern Africa, “the beer monopoly represented a means whereby the (Cameroonian) labour force subsidized the costs of its own reproduction and correspondingly minimized the costs of “native administration” to the settler colonial state” (Rogerson and Tucker, 1986: 141).

Unfortunately, the economic surplus appropriated by the ruling circles of Cameroon’s precolonial societies never found its way as new inputs (reinvestment) into the production process. Rather, the surplus was merely frittered away in unproductive conspicuous consumption. The vast majority that produced were deprived of the fruits of their labour. They thus tended to be psychologically unwilling, due to alienation from the appropriation of the surplus, to contribute their maximum to production. Similarly, there were no new inputs of ideas or investible surplus from the external economic transactions dominated by the ruling circles of these Cameroonian societies into the subsistence sector adequate enough to transform production in a self-sustaining manner.

The failure of these ruling circles to reinvest the appropriated surplus was due to an excessive emphasis on their control over people to the neglect of their control over their physical and biological environments. More premium was therefore put on political survival than on the economic aspects of social life. For example, in 1914, King Rudolf Manga Bell of Douala requested Sultan Njoya to support the Douala natives in their struggle against German colonialism. But, Sultan Njoya’s reaction was typical of the nature of present-

day Cameroonian politicians: The Germans are my masters, if they treat me well or not, I shall remain faithful to them ... I, NJOYA, I know that if I give my support to this affair and the Germans learn of it, they will arrest me together with (King) MANGA and (FON) FONYONGA (of Bali) and kill us because we would have betrayed the (German) Emperor (Ngoh, 1988:77).

The exchange of goods and services often times operated according to a system of reciprocal obligations linked to the social situation of those in kinship or patron-client relationships rather than in accordance with the dictates of economic forces. Finally, colonialism increased the imbalances and unintegration. That is to say, colonial imperialism was first and foremost an economic enterprise with the primary goal of profit-making. This economic consideration explains how colonialism is a process of under developing the colonies in the interest of the imperialist. This process further explains the various forms of colonial activities as well as the timing of these activities by the colonial government.

The colonial governments had to reduce the colonies to a position of dependency to achieve the expected goal. And three major strategies were employed. The leading one was to contradictorily undermine the power of traditional political institutions simultaneously and superimpose those of the mother country. At the same time they were implanting seeds of regional inequalities and ethnic animosities which necessitated reliance on the “good offices” of the imperial government to resolve. These seeds of inequalities and ethnic animosities eloquently explain why the Germans capitalized on the Cameroonian sense of obedience and respect for authorities (Ngoh, 1988:87). However, some repressive policies of the Germans (Le Vine, 1964:36) “fostered protest movements containing the seeds of future political action.”

This “future political action” started soon after 1916. German rule in Cameroon enabled politically conscious Cameroonians to regard the splitting of the country into British and French Zones in 1916 as on interim, for this period reminded them of “a half-mythical golden age when the Cameroons were one” (Le Vine, 1964:38). And the bloody struggles for independence and re-unification were to dominate the era of British and French rule in Cameroon between 1916 and 1960. In addition, the imperial powers forcibly established an economic system in the colonies that was strongly tied to that of the metropolitan country in a subservient manner. Adam Smith stated bluntly in 1776 that:

To propose that Great Britain should voluntarily give up all authority over her colonies... would be to propose such a measure as never was and never will be adopted by any nation in the world. (Smith, 1776:112-113).

In the case of France, “the same principle of free intercourse” (Joseph, 1978:16) was “applied to the (French) wolf and the (African) sheep. De Gaulle had captured France’s continued role in the colonial periphery saying: “If the overseas territories detach themselves from the metropolis, or if we allow our forces to become hung up there, how much will we count for between the North Sea and the Mediterranean? (Marshall, 1973:717). The brutal reality (Suret-Canale, 1971) of the enormity of French colonial exploitation, destruction of African societies, and pillage attest to the absurd “free intercourse.”

French, however, helped in driving a wedge under Cameroon unity. And French Cameroonians saw themselves in factions and fractions. Chief Jean Nyap of Ndogbessol, Eseka, could thus write to German Chancellor Adolf Hitler crying: I was bam under your Empire and I am either 35 or 36 years old. I am telling you with tears in my eyes ... I very much like Germany. I would very much wish that you return (to Cameroon). French orders are different from yours. (Ngoh, 1988:121-122).

In any case, the major function of colonialism was to restructure the economies of the colonies so that they would fit into the emergent world capitalist system. The process had three interwoven parts. First, colonies were compelled to produce mostly raw materials and foodstuffs needed by the capitalist states and cease to produce those manufactures which metropolitan countries wished to sell to them. Two modes of production (communal, slave or feudal) had to be articulated with capitalist modes of production. That is, compulsory growing of cotton, cocoa, coffee, rubber, palm oil, etc. by peasants had to be organized in order to provide materials for capitalist processing and export. Finally, physical, political and juridical structures were created to cater for the needs of metropolitan capital. These structures were to guarantee the efficient operation of capital in Africa as in Europe or North America.

These three vicious processes produced their Cameroonian victims (labourers), and beneficiaries were subordinated to the colonial state. But this

colonial state did not only act as an expression of capitalist domination. It played a crucial role in this process clearing the ground for surplus appropriation and redistribution taking place through the colonial state. And this attendant appropriation, with redistribution at state level engendered corruption because the result was a distorted and unproductive capitalism (underdevelopment) where wealth was completely dissociated from entrepreneurial activity. And the retardation and distortion created confusion, multi-level conflict, inequalities, class crystallization and violent state containment of disintegration of Cameroon. Furthermore, the imperial powers undermined the self confidence of the colonial subjects, their culture and general life-style and thus changed their total orientation in such a way as to make them look down on their heritage and look up to the whiteman's life-style as the model.

Nyamnjoh (1988:81) is right in observing that like Britain and other Western nations, France has a well elaborated policy of promoting its culture and language in the less industrialized world. But unlike some of its Western counterparts, France has never made a secret of its desire to 'frenchify' any developing country where it has had the opportunity to exert influence of any kind. Where other countries have preferred a more subtle approach, France has appeared rather blatant and aggressive; and where others have succeeded through indirections, France has attained the same goals in a more direct manner.

Ironically, "the concept of a French Union of a Greater France, of a Franco-African Community in which men of different races and colour drawn together by French culture, would cooperate on the basis of *liberte, egalite et fratermite* had a great appeal for the African leaders" (Crowder, 1965). This explains clearly why Cameroon stumbled into independence and reunification with the French "language, her customs, her flag, her weapons, (and) her genius" (Brunschwig, 1966:29). Indeed, educational inequalities, class differentiations, urban-rural dichotomies, ethnic animosities and infrastructural imbalances served as structural obstacles to national integration at the on-set of political freedom. Therefore, one can comfortably join Nnoli (1980:28) in concluding that:

The colonialists were impelled first and foremost by the profit motive of exploiting cheap labour and raw materials and seldom by any desire for balanced socio-economic development of the various regions and ethnic

homeland of the colony. Therefore those regions, or sections of them, which were neither significant centres of colonial economic production nor situated along the major centres of the colonial system of communication and administration suffered socio-economically.

Indeed, Cameroon's economy at independence was poorly integrated. German, British and French colonial policies encouraged the economy to develop with "enclaves" or with dual sectors, where one urban or rural area was heavily involved in export or cash crop production, while the rest of Cameroon lagged far behind. The "enclave areas" had far higher incomes, greater access to education and other social services, and consumed manufactured goods largely imported from Europe. Nevertheless, it is to the credit of European (especially German) colonialism that there is a territorial basis for national integration in Cameroon

Neocolonial Imbalances and National Unintegration

The results of "developmental efforts" in Cameroon, and the glaring manifestations of grinding poverty, urban sprawl, unemployment, and seemingly uncontrolled populations have created a sense of dismay among scholars. The existence of poverty vis-a-vis affluence has made many to lose faith in the elusive concept of "economic development" and political independence. Nevertheless, the ubiquitous Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) defines economic development as: The process of making fuller and more rational the economic utilization of the natural and human resources of a country. It is made possible by increased investment, by improvement in technique and organization and by education or training of the people.

A critical examination of the ingredients within the above definition would show that these goals are easier to theorize upon than to achieve. The reason for this lies in the fact that development is complex to measure, difficult to define and vague to isolate its determinants. The literature is replete with controversies on "economic development" and "economic growth," "balanced" and "unbalanced" growth, the "big push," and so on. However, regional economic imbalances cannot nurse and sustain national integration.

In Cameroon, the economy is closely bound up with agriculture (at least

27% of exports since 1980) upon which at least 76.9% of the rural population depend. This implies that the future economic development of Cameroon depends largely on the outcome of a series of efforts made in the rural sector. The latter sector includes agricultural occupation (farming) and other non-agricultural (non-farming) activities such as tailoring, petty trading, etc. It is significant that while 80% of Cameroonians live in the rural areas, and agriculture has continued to make a worthy contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (with 74% of the active population absorbed by it), the rural areas remain economically backward and poverty-stricken.

The rural population in Cameroon collectively lacks adequate purchasing power to enable them acquire basic needs of life. It is also not controverted that there is a serious underdevelopment of the country's rural areas particularly with respect to infrastructures such as water supply, transportation and electrification. While rural lands are well populated, lack of efficient means of evacuation limits the amount of surplus production. Consequently, the annual rate of growth of food production 1980-85 (2%), 1986-90 (-0.1%) has lagged behind that of population (3%) because of defective policy approaches toward promoting rural development (Ndongko, 1986).

German, British and French colonizers laid the foundation for future agricultural and rural policies in Cameroon. Efforts were made which resulted in the development of an export crop economy as a basis for growth. After independence, Cameroonian small holders maintained the impetus in the areas of both export and food crop economies through their initiatives and through their positive responses as well as sensitivity to market opportunities rather than by government direction.

So, efforts made toward rural development in Cameroon were largely non-governmental; hence, one can legitimately conclude that there was no rural development programme as such. Myriads of small farmers, especially women, in Cameroon's rural areas were left to produce mainly export and some food crops.

The case of women is worth discussing. Just as ill-health and illiteracy may promote lack of availability for participation and national integration, so do social prejudices and social taboos. In particular the discrimination against women in education and their exclusion from integration into various sectors of economic and political activity is a profound hindrance to political participation. Students of national integration who emphasize cognitive

condition like the knowledge of the names of incumbent national rulers, awareness of national geographical boundaries of members of the national political community (or citizenship), etc. tend to ignore this more profound level of the creative integration of women's intellectual, physical and moral talents into the national collective productivity of the Cameroonian society and of its history. Money Siphoned from export crop taxes through the marketing board was used to provide essential facilities mostly in the urban areas. Benefits to the rural population were fairly negligible.

Rural stagnation and rural underdevelopment are clear from the capital outlay allocated to agriculture: 1980 (2.2%), 1983 (5.3%), 1984 (6.4%), 1985 (7.6%), 1986 (7.0%), 1987 (7.7%), 1989 (3.2%). These decreasing figures are irrespective of formulated objectives which varied from creating "a united, strong and self-reliant nation" to sustaining "a free and democratic society." Approaches of the country's previous Five Year Development Plans to agricultural and rural development concentrate more on foreign large schemes to the disadvantage of the Cameroonian small farmers that constitute the majority. Between 1970 and 1990, 4% of public investments went to agriculture.

Evidence is not far to seek. France dominated all direct foreign investment in Cameroon (67.5%) in 1984. These investments were in strategic areas as the metallurgical industry, agriculture and food, general trade, financial institutions, construction and public works, and chemical and plastics industries. Therefore, in a society where an alien minority uses its monopoly of economic resources and political means of violence to exploit and repress other classes, it integrates the exploited classes transnationally into its economic, social and political processes conflictually and violently. And the correspondence between poverty and the rural peasantry, wealth, political power and urbanism also means national "unintegration" on material lines.

This "unintegration" explains why rural development has stagnated in Cameroon despite governmental interventions because of (a) lack of local mass participation in the development plans; (b) paltry budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector; and (c) lack of studied understanding of all climatic, soil, institutional and natural factors that constitute the input mix in agricultural and rural development. This situation gives rise to the formulation of wrong and inappropriate policies which fail to cater for regional imbalances between urban and rural areas. Regional economic

imbalances generate conflicts which augur badly for national integration. .

It is noteworthy that the “omnipresence” of the Cameroon National Union single-party, as Geschlere (1986:73) notes, was manifest even in the most remote village in the country. However, we also agree with Derrick (1992:95) that Cameroonians’ apparent docility due to the dedemocratization of society under one-party rule was merely skin deep. Politically educated and alert, they lived with it grudgingly until the 1990 explosive drive for democratization.

In addition to unintegrative rural-urban imbalances is the dedemocratization of Cameroon. But encouraging professional and other interest groups, allowing freedom of association and expression, and reforming the judicial and legal systems are apparently not yet on the agenda of the Cameroonian leadership. The well-entrenched elite practices have shown the extent to which ideals of equality, participation, accountability, responsiveness, and self-realization have been long subordinated. Ahidjo was steadfastly intolerant of any political dissent and practically outlawed all legitimate opposition voices and gestures using tactics such as centralization, elite coalition-building, and outright repression. In Jua’s (1991:163) words, President Ahidjo “appropriated the state, becoming ruler-manager with the exclusive right to issue commands and give political instructions.” Thus, in the place of democratic ideals has grown decisive politicization, radicalization and militarization of tribalism. The politicization of ethnicity in Cameroon was robed in Ahidjo’s policy of “regional balance” and “national unity” (Johnson, 1970; Bayart, 1979; Ngayap, 1983; Pokam, 1986; Ndongko, 1988; Mbuyinga, 1989; and Fogui, 1990). This unique system ensured ethnic representation in the state apparatus. Prebantal and patronage opportunities were devices to promote the “ethnic calculus” according to which elites from all the country’s regions were served their fair slice of the national cake (Jua, 1991:163). Ethnic representatives (barons) thus owed total allegiance to President Ahidjo.

Kale (1985:55) observes of the ethno-clientelist parallel that:

... it was not unusual to find that entire ministries, departments within ministries, parastatal organizations, etc. become prebendary structures to reward members of the Minister’s ethnic group. In each Ministry, preferential treatment in hiring and promotion was usually given to the Minister’s ethnic group.

Any ethnic baron who attempted to build a personal power base was viewed as a treacherous ingrate and flushed out of office with shame and ignominy. Ahidjo's successor, Paul Biya, introduced other dimensions of politicization (Mentan, 1993:158-176) with "rigour" i.e. radicalization and militarization of ethnicity. This he dubbed "national integration." The radicalization and militarization of ethnicity showed its ugly head in 1983 with the outbreak of the Biya-Ahidjo political power tangle. The abortive 1984 putsch was given the simplistic interpretation of Beti victors and Hausa vanquished. The victors thus sought in winner-take-all fashion, to use state power for the development of a personal economic base.

Appointments to the 170 parastatals were both politicized and ethnicized. The over-expanded, omnipresent and interventionist state therefore became the instrument and arena for factional fighting for the economic pie. This is particularly true of the customs and Excise Department where fraud in 1989 alone was estimated by the very state at some U.S. \$75 million (Hubbard, 1992:50). In like manner that the state was defrauded of 1,500 milliards CFA between 1981 and 1986, the civil service was swollen by ethnic faithful from 120,600 in 1983 to 180,000 in 1988 accounting for 70 per cent of the state's recurrent expenditure. National savings as percentage of GDP went thus: 1989 (10.1 %), 1990 (4.8%), 1992 (1.9%) and worse. Anybody of the group of "outs" who stood in the way of the get-rich-quick ambitions of the "ins" was ruthlessly dealt with.

In Cameroon today, 40 per cent of the rural people and 15 per cent of those in "urban" areas live below the poverty line. According to Derrick (1992:19) there were 76,500 people in the army of unemployed Cameroonians by 1992. Though the number of unemployed is growing by leaps and bounds, "capital flight" is above 150 milliards FCFA (Azonga, 1993:1145) per annum, which accounts for about one quarter of the national annual budget. Therefore, the "capital flight" for the "ins" functions in a dialectical relationship with the decapitalization and impoverishment of the "outs." It is thus understandable why Cameroon's Gross Domestic Investment would be 1989 (16.5% of GDP), 1990 (14.6%), 1991 (12.6%), 1992 (11.1%), 1993 (10.8%) as it deteriorates with the years.

The contradictions of a policy of national integration and radicalization of ethnicity forced a regression to autocracy. This regression with its systemic defects such as worsening of the lack of independent authority and highly

opaque, discretionary policy processes triggered the clamour for democratization, especially in the 1990s. The popular struggles for multipartyism laid the foundation for rigorously militarized exclusionary ethnic political practices by the government. Whether manipulative, coercive, or both these practices affected national politics because their cumulative effects tended to tip the national balance in favour of an impending disintegration of the country,

Furthermore, politicization, radicalization and militarization of ethnic forces went along with the denationalization as well as decapitalization of Cameroon. Anyone who attempted to be militantly nationalistic was simply eased out of existence or driven to distant exile in the Ahidjo years or coolly killed, snubbed or mocked out of favour in the Biya years. External economic dependence nurtured during the colonial era and militantly pursued by successor post-colonial regimes brought in its wake structural distortions of the economy. These structural distortions created room for the decapitalization of the economy or what is commonly called “capital flight.” “Capital flight,” once institutionalized, aggravated the economic situation which became obvious in 1987 with the drop in the prices of oil and cash crops and raw materials. The attendant ills were that upgrading the quality of the civil service, developing career streams, putting in place promotion and pay systems based on merit, strengthening budgetary and investment management, and building policy analysis and regulatory capacity were thrown to the winds.

In fact, government expenditure on wages and salaries rose and fell with election fevers: 1987 (29.3%); 1988 (43%); 1989 (33.7%) 1990 (38.6%); 1991 (40.7%) 1992 (50.7%). Hence, padding the civil service payrolls became a vote-securing tactic. And vote-catchers for the ruling party, as noted by *Le Messenger* No. 438 of June, 1995, stash away money in foreign banks. This is the case of Minister Jean Fochive and Electricity Corporation Manager N. Niat who were alleged to have carted away 3 milliard FCFA.

The ensuing poverty fanned “ethnic hatreds.” These ethnic, gender, cultural, etc., “hatreds” were actively and purposefully created and exploited as a means of stopping or slowing shifts in the locus and structure of political power in Cameroon. And, indeed, these ‘hatreds’ are wars against democratization with regional inequalities and national unintegration as its pillars. For example, the pro-Beti newspaper, *Le Patriote*, is hell-bent on fanning ethnic “hatreds.” While No. 161 of April, 1995 argued that most of

the voters for 1992 Presidential candidate Fru Ndi were Bamilekes and Anglophones (Anglo-Bamis), No. 69 of May 1991 sought to defend Betis against charges of economic crimes.

The feasible lesson here is that a class, ethnic and economically stratified society is fundamentally not integrated. To integrate the society, the economic power of the ruling minority groups must first be dismantled and then taken over by the state. In this way the emotional link between economic wants and the action of the state which used to be a monopoly of the minority upper classes will thus be spread to the landless, peasants, workers and students. The spread of the emotional links will be materialized by bringing resources which create shared sentiments of identity among the bottom classes which cut across ethnic and urban/rural divisions.

This process of spreading emotional economic sentiments to peasants, workers, students and others in the Cameroonian population would also be manifested in the political sector. It is noteworthy that the political legacy of Cameroon has been the callous manipulation and monopoly of political information, political decision-making and political offices, not national integration. Another area of national integration is culture including sports and tourism. The tradition of sports in a neo-colonial class society is the commercialization of sports, the relegation of the masses to spectators or their total exclusion from watching if they are too poor to pay gate fees, as in rural areas. Sports as basketball, volleyball, baseball, football, and athletics are simply not for rural Cameroonians. Consequently, there is a profound untapping and under-utilization of the talents of rural peoples and the urban poor.

Conclusions

Traditional centralized, top-down commandism has dominated national governance in Cameroon throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. The key characteristics included centralized and militarized police powers, appointed rather than elected mayors and governors, and extreme fiscal and bureaucratized centralization. These practices are found across the entire political spectrum, from Ahidjo to Biya. However, the role of the Cameroon government is changing in two ways: international economic integration is limiting the scope for market regulation, while on the domestic front national authorities are being compelled by their economic incompetence to devolve

major responsibilities to local authorities. This will inexorably lead to decentralization rather than to deconcentration. Of course, decentralization does not necessarily involve the democratization of local government.

Nevertheless, local democratization has two dimensions. It, first of all, involves opening up territorially based subnational governments to electoral competition. Second, it entails the elimination of exclusionary political practices, including fraud, unfair limits on voter registration, the lack of ballot secrecy, voter intimidation, and vote buying. These are issues of electoral freedoms, as distinct from issues of electoral fairness (e.g. media access, campaign financing, etc.). These issues, when resolved, could erase persistent authoritarian enclaves which feed on regional imbalances and national disintegrative practices. In other words, long-standing exclusionary practices could disappear with the disappearance of the signing of decrees or the transfer of the presidential sash in Western capitals. The disappearance of authoritarian enclaves would enable Cameroonians to learn to share power. The reason is that democratic government requires that contending forces transcend “winner-take-all” politics and learn how to share power. That is, competing political parties that run different levels of government should coexist. This permits the opposition to learn how to govern locally, while obliging the national government to share a measure of power with its opponents, who may govern entire states or provinces.

Finally, social policies must be reformed. Traditional Cameroon social policies are widely known for their clientelism, corruption, and failure to reach the poorest. As national antipoverty policies become less centralized, grassroots movements for social justice could turn increasingly from confrontation to more pragmatic approaches, forming constructive, balanced and integrative partnerships with both local and national governments. Indeed, these social policies require a party system in Cameroon which: (a) can stem the revolution of rising expectations; (b) transcend multi-communalism as the basis of politics; (c) confront the problematic of economic dependency and underdevelopment; and (d) re-order the processes of class formation and class consolidation.

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Chapter Three

Redressing Regional Imbalance in Cameroon: The Lessons from The Past

Emmanuel M. Chiabi

Problem

Regional balance and National Integration for any country is a Herculean task. For Cameroon, the task is doubly difficult considering its complexity. Cameroon is Africa in miniature. It is a land of hills and valleys; a land of rivers and lakes. It is a land of forests and grassland. It is a land of torrential rainfall and of scorching sunshine. Cameroon is a Babel nation of some 236 different ethnic groups³. As a 'traveller arrives the Douala or Yaounde airport, he or she is welcomed by the forest or the mangrove swamps which have shaped both the political structure and economic occupation of the peoples of these regions. As he or she moves into the interior towards the north, he or she emerges into savannah country and then to grassland country. He has moved from the Coastal Bantu into the Semi Bantu region. Here, the traveller finds traditional kingdoms or fondoms that provided the basis of centralized administration in pre-colonial times. Here in Nso or Kom, you find a marked difference from the pygmies of the forests who cluster in small decentralized family units.

So when we talk about regional balance and national integration, do we seek utopia or reality? Is the balance and national integration on the basis of regions or peoples? Can we transport the Great Sanaga to Ngaoundere or can we move the Majestic Mount Fako from Buea to Yokadouma so that the recipient peoples might enjoy the benefits of those geographical features? Can the Tignere become the great pygmy hunters?

Do we seek to integrate and create a balance in persons or regions? Even

³ Maurice Tadajeu, "For a Policy of Cameroonian Linguistic Integration: Extensive Trilingualism," in Ministry of Information and Culture, The Cultural Identity of Cameroon (Yaoundé, 1985).

regions are problematic. Regions have sub-regions. Take the Anglophones as constituting a region as distinct from the Francophone region. In the Anglophone region, there is the northwest and the southwest sub-group. Then take the Northwest and you have the divisional sub-groups or even the resilient sub-group--the ethnic sub-group (the Nso, the Bafut, the Bali, the Kom, etc). If you take Kom as a "region", you have the sub-regions of Abasakom, Njinikom and Belo. Here, as in some other places, religion has divided the region into religious sub-groups. What about the integration and balance on the basis of gender? All of these questions complicate the already complex issue of regional balance and national integration. Shall we ignore the question of redressing the imbalance and attempting national integration because of the complexity of the problem? No. The difficult task is to "attempt to make an earnest effort towards a better regional balance and more efficient national integration.

Introduction

It seems to me that when most people talk about regional balance and national integration, they are not quite sure about these concepts, or really serious about understanding the concepts. On Monday October 16, 1995, government declared a public holiday in celebration of Cameroon's admission into the Commonwealth of Nations. On November 1, 1995, Cameroon officially took its seat in the Commonwealth, when the Commonwealth of Nations met in Auckland, New Zealand. Cameroon has become a member of two different groups--Commonwealth and Francophonie. Was that a re-balkanization of what took place in 1916? Did we quite understand the implications of Cameroon's dual membership in terms of regional balance and national integration? Did our policy-makers understand or have the political will to truly deal with the issue of regional balance and national integration? How do we explain the fact that the politicians and/or policy-makers who preach national integration and sometimes regional balance, prevent or hinder these concepts through political exigencies?

There are regions which by their population statistics deserve schools or other institutions, but because the people from these regions do not toe the ruling party's line, they are neglected and left out of the mainstream development projects while others are over endowed. The present policy of

the government as often cited by the Prime Minister is “Scratch my back and I scratch your own.” How does this fit in with a genuine policy of national integration and regional balance? These questions only highlight another one—who really is responsible for regional balance and national integration (the government and policymakers, the people or researchers)? Regardless upon whom this task falls, an understanding of the concepts is necessary before solutions can be attempted. Here, a researcher attempts to illuminate the problem.

If I could provide solutions to redress regional imbalance, I would be the most sought after researcher in the world, considering that regional imbalance is a worldwide phenomenon and is a vast concept. My task here is not really to provide a solution, but to attempt a definition of some concepts that deal with regional imbalance and national integration-- the concepts that we seek to redress--since we cannot redress what we do not understand. Secondly, we shall examine the origin of the imbalance in order to best seek to redress it. Thirdly, we shall examine some past attempts to redress imbalance and foster national integration. Finally, we shall examine some problems that foster regional imbalance and national integration, as well as make suggestions for a better march towards regional balance and national integration. First the concept of ‘nation.’

Cameroon: A Nation or “Nations”

When we talk about Cameroon and Cameroonians, we assume a nation of peoples with a sense of togetherness and belonging. But the truth is that if we posed the question, “where are you from?” to many Cameroonians, the response will be the name of a village, ethnic group (tribe) division or province. Take an illiterate Cameroonian and ask him that question anywhere in the world and the response will be a parochial response. This underscores the problem inherent in the concept of nation.

The concept that the Bali, Bakweri, Bassa, Ewondo, Pygmies and the 200 and more others were a nation, can be traced to what has been called, the “Kamerun Idea”. The “Kamerun Idea” is a concept that was employed in the late 1940s and early 1950s by nationalists to buttress their arguments for unification of the two British and French Cameroons. They argued that Cameroon had been one under the Germans and that it was the British and

the French who divided Cameroon. This argument presents a problem in the understanding of the concept of nation and that of nationalism. The “Kamerun Idea” raised the intriguing question of whether or not there was a nation called “Kamerun” by the time World War I’s military campaign expelled the Germans from “Kamerun”. The British anthropologist, Edwin Ardener, took the stance that there was no German “Kamerun”. However, Ndiva Kofele-Kale took Ardener to task and argued the contrary. Whatever ‘the case or one’s stance, the concept of “nation” is a controversial one.’⁴ Here, we shall briefly examine the concept of nation and its constituents to see how the concept correlates with that ethnic group (tribe). *The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, ambiguously defines the word “nation” as either synonymous with a state or inhabitants, or else it denotes a human group bound together by common solidarity - a group whose members place loyalty to the group as a whole over any conflicting loyalties.”⁵ The Encyclopaedia further observes that the word has become “blurred” and “nationalists have generated more heat than light,” and that the word “has become ... a favourite weapon of political polemics.”

In his definition of the concept, Karl Deutsch, who sees a nation as a people who have gained control over some institutions of social coercion, suggests a “layer-cake pattern” which, briefly stated, holds that the nation-state comprises human layers--ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, etc.⁶ The failure to establish as one scholar put it, a “watertight” definition, suggests that in the final analysis the scale tips in favour of an open-ended definition and that the general concept may be best explained by examining its characteristics?⁷ Although establishing a precise definition of and criteria for

⁴ The “Kamerun Idea” was first introduced in Cameroonian historiography by Edwin Ardener, see *West Africa* (June 7 and 14, 1958), pp. 533 and 559; Kofele-Kale, *An African Experiment in Nation Building: The Bilingual Cameroon Republic Since Reunification* (Boulder, Colorado, 1980).

⁵ Vol. II (1968), pp. 7-9.

⁶ Karl W. Deutsch, “The Growth of Nations: Some Recurrent Patterns of Political and Social Integration,” in *World Politics*, vol. 2 (January, 1953), pp. 169-172.

⁷ For some of these characteristics and criteria, see Frederick Hertz, *Nationality in History and Politics* (London, 1944), pp. 11-15; Ernest Haas, cited in Henry Nwosu. “The Concept of Nationalism and the Right to Self-Determination: Cameroon as a Case Study,” *African Quarterly*, xvi, 2 (1976), p. 3; Deutsch, “Growth of Nations” pp. 172-173.

“nation” has eluded scholars worldwide, the problem has been even more tantalizing for Africanists. Especially vexing to the Africanist is the question of whether to define an African country, comprised of many ethnic groups with distinct languages, religions, and cultural and historical traditions, as a “nation” or “nations”.

In his study on Nigerian nationalism, James S. Coleman, subjectively defined a nation as “a large group of people who feel that they form a single and exclusive community destined to be an independent state.” He noted about Nigeria’s ethnic groups: “as yet none of the Nigerian ‘peoples’ are ‘nations’ ... neither are they all ‘tribes’”⁸. Coleman further concluded that “in some respects nationalities may be considered as ‘extended tribes,’ [and] in other respects as ‘incipient nations.’” Hans Kohn, however, rejects the idea that ethnic groups may be considered as nations since “tribalism complicated the formation of nations.”⁹

Authorities agree that whatever definition we assign the word “nation”, we must base our definition upon a number of subjective criteria which mayor may not be universal. For example, Coleman, using size, a common cultural and historical tradition and a common language as part of his criteria, referred to the Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa as nationalities. He postulated the existence of these peoples as the three major nationalities within the Nigerian nation. The question raised by Coleman and others is whether many of the African ethnic groups were incipient nations or were merely extended “tribes”? A consensus does not exist, but some experts have placed some groups as incipient or “full-fledged nations.” Hence, Kohn and Sokolsky could make “a case for the view that the Ewe, Kikuyu, Baganda, Yoruba, Barotse, Zulus, etc. existed as “nations”” and Coleman could maintain that the Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa were nationalities.¹⁰ The Kenyan father of nationalism, Jomo Kenyatta, asserted that the Kikuyu “possessed a ‘spirit of collectivism and national solidarity which they [had] been able to maintain

⁸ Nigeria: *Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), p. 423.

⁹ Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: its Meaning and History* (New Jersey, 1965), p. 90

¹⁰ Hans Kohn and Wallace Sokolsky, *African Nationalism in the 20th Century* (New Jersey, 1965), p. 11: Coleman, *Nigeria*, p. 423.

from time immemorial.”¹¹ Some writers have rejected this view.’¹²

In pre-European Cameroon, ethnic groups which complied with some of the criteria used by the social scientists to define traditional “nations”, existed. The fons of Kom, Nso, and Bali; the sultan of Foumban and the chiefs of Buea, Yaounde and Victoria considered themselves as sovereign, ruling supreme over their “nations” or “countries”. During the colonial period and modern times, however, the nature of the traditional “nation” altered. Karl Deutsch believed that the “study of the growth of nations reveal cumulative change” and that “at many places and times, tribes have merged to form peoples; and peoples have grown into nations.”¹³ We can, therefore, conveniently agree that prior to German colonization of Cameroon, diverse ethnic groups (Coleman’s “incipient nations”) existed and during the German administration an embryonic Cameroonian nation bearing the name “Kamerun”, grew. The events of World War I and its aftermath would alter the nature and structure of Cameroon, adding to or complicating the existing natural differences or imbalances.

Geographical Imbalance and National Integration

Regional imbalance and national disparity in Cameroon are both a consequence of historical as well as natural factors. To begin to talk about redressing imbalance, we must understand what we mean by imbalance. Nature divided Cameroon into the forest and grassland region. This is a fact. By this division, the political structures and occupational activities of these regions are different. Cattle rearing and major farming are more the activities of the grasslands than of the forest regions. On the other hand, plantation agriculture is more conducive in the forest regions than in the grassland. The Germans had experimented and proved that plantations rubber, palm, etc., fared better in the forest region. Europeans also experimented and proved

¹¹ Cited by Kohn and Sokolsky. *African Nationalism*. P.11

¹² See for example. Sithole Ndabaningi, *African Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London, 1968); Diederich Westermann, *The African Today and Tomorrow* (London, 1939); Maurice Delafosse, *The Negroes in Africa* (Washington D.C., 1931).

¹³ Deutsch, “Growth of Nations ...” pp. 168-169.

that coffee does better in the grassland region while cocoa does better in the forest region. That too is a fact. Can we then redress these imbalances? Nature equally endowed regions with certain minerals and others with none. The oil reserves of the coastal region are nature's gift to that region. The grassland regions cannot do anything to acquire oil. Nature, through geography, created an imbalance in Cameroon as in many other countries.

Besides geographical discrepancies as those listed above, there are economic disparities that contribute to the imbalance in Cameroon. In his article, "The Political Economy of Regional Economic Development in Cameroon," Wilfred A. Ndongko has recognized the problems of "economic justice in the distribution of the fruits of economic progress ..."¹⁴ These problems arise because the geographical factors have account for the fact that certain regions are more endowed than others and that some of the factors cannot be reversed. The Sanaga river has contributed to the industrial activities of Edea and its environs in the same vein as the sea ports of Douala and Limbe have made those towns important commercial towns (even if the activities are unequal). Both regional planners and politicians will be hard pressed promising a seaport for Nwa or anywhere else in the northwest province. These people must remain content with the economic activities of the few rivers they have. The economic activities of Douala and Victoria will be a herculean task to replicate in Bertoua or Tchollire. Even the creation of artificial lakes will remain an approximation.

Regarding economic disparity in the two former colonial territories of Cameroon, Jacques Benjamin observed that in East Cameroon, priority was accorded to industrialization while in the West Cameroon, industrialization was quite low. Benjamin records that between 1967 and 1971, there were 700 industrial firms in East Cameroon as opposed to 27 (mostly of agro-related processing plants) in West Cameroon. Even in the agricultural sector or structures of the two regions, Benjamin noted a difference in nature. "In the West," observed Benjamin, "most of the production is ensured by the Cameroons Development Corporation, which employs more than 11,500 wage-earners. In the East, family-type plantations are the general rule."¹⁵ This situation which, by and large, still obtains allowed for more capital

¹⁴ In Ndiva Kofele-Kale, *An African Experiment*, p. 227.

¹⁵ See his article, "The Impact of Federal Institutions on West Cameroon's Economic Activity," in Kofele-Kale. *An African Experiment*, pp. 191-192

accumulation in the East than it did for the farmers or planters of the West. So in Cameroon, we observed a difference in the economic endowment of the regions, the economic structures and actual economic situation of regions; especially the former colonial regions.

Nature not only endowed Cameroon with disparity in geography and economic potential, but also in multi-ethnicity. Cameroon is one of the world's most multi-ethnic, multilingual countries. Ethnographers and linguists estimate that Cameroon has over 200 groups. Some of these groups are as small as the pygmies and others as large as the Bamileke. Small or big, these groups constitute a distinct unit and claim a right to be identified and recognized as such. They may be seen as a "region." While the foregoing represents imbalances created mostly by natural factors, there are other factors of imbalance and diversity that have largely been the creation of history.

Colonial Fragmentation and Regional Imbalance In Cameroon

In recent Cameroon history, the name "Bakassi" has become familiar to many for various reasons. For one thing, the recent Bakassi issue between Cameroon and Nigeria signifies, or calls to play, the irony of international borders for Africa as they were drawn by colonial powers following the Berlin Conference of 1885. Following that Conference, Germany acquired Cameroon and began a process that would outline "Cameroon's" international boundaries. Ironically, the colonizers would become vehicles of regional imbalance as well as those of national integration. Through their policy of "divide and rule" and the system of collaboration "with those African or Cameroonian peoples who accepted their rule, the colonizers fostered regional imbalance. However, through their languages and culture and other aspects, they created the means of providing common traits which Africans or Cameroonians could see as a common identity. Colonization or more appropriately, Westernization, was, therefore, a mixed blessing in terms of regional imbalance and national integration. ("Blessing" would mean that despite the erosion of African traditional values by Westernization, the "blessing" was the replacement of multi-ethnic values with Western or colonial ones). Here, we shall examine how two Western powers affected two regions in Cameroon to provide two cultures that have polarized Cameroon into two regions. The two regions are Anglophone and

Francophone Cameroon, and the two powers are France and Britain.

After the expulsion of the Germans in 1916, the British and French partitioned Cameroon (following a brief period of joint rule or condominium from 1914-1916). Through their administrative structures, policies and cultures, these powers fostered regional disparities in Cameroon. They created Anglophone Cameroon and Francophone Cameroon. Within these regions, the Europeans were responsible for the urban-rural divide of Cameroon. On March 4, 1916, Cameroon was officially partitioned between Britain and France. The English settled for an approximate one-fifth of the population and much less of the total land surface of Cameroon while France acquired the Lion's share. From the beginning, therefore, the unequal partition of Cameroon provided the basis for an imbalance. By dividing Cameroon on the basis of 1:4, the minority-majority basis of Cameroon was established. Anglophones were later to find themselves in the minority to the Francophones. Regional imbalance would span beyond the un-proportional division of Cameroon to include the areas of administration, politics, education, economy and culture.

On their part, the English "integrated" their territory of Cameroon with Nigeria and adopted the policy of Indirect Rule. Through this system, the British used the indigenous authorities or chiefs as intermediaries whenever they could identify them. Where they could not identify any chiefs, they appointed those of their choice. The criteria for appointing and using indigenous chiefs were based, in part, on the assumption that these rulers wielded power and that they were sovereign. This in a way confirmed the view that many of these leaders were "heads" of "nations". The system of Indirect Rule encouraged participation by the indigenous rulers but, more than that, it encouraged decentralization by creating what became known as "Native Authorities". According to Lord Frederick Lugard, the exponent of the policy of Indirect Rule, the role of the British government was to teach the Africans to direct their own affairs with "justice and humanity?"¹⁶

British policy on education maintained missionary participation in the field. Missionary education began in 1844 and thus by the time the British acquired Cameroon in 1916, the missionaries had been in the field for some 70 years. Missionary education emphasized the three "**R's**" and was mainly doctrinaire in nature. Religious instruction remained a focal point of the

¹⁶ Cameroon Report, Annual Report (1947), p.1

curriculum. This early education produced the type of men that have been referred to as “yes sir” men.¹⁷ These were people who sought an education to acquire jobs and work within the status quo and later on remained largely conservative during the era of African nationalism.

British policy of integration with Nigeria greatly contributed to the economic neglect of Cameroon. The result is that Nigerian businessmen flooded Cameroon and played the role of middle men. This prevented the emergence of people with economic power as was the case in Nigeria, Ghana or adjacent French Cameroon. Economic activities were mainly in the hands of Nigerians and not British firms, and there was very little investment undertaken by the British in Cameroon. For example, even the Kumba-Mamfe road which linked Cameroon to Nigeria, was only completed in 1947.¹⁸ Efforts at development were mainly directed at Nigeria, which was often erroneously considered as part of Cameroon. During the era of nationalism, anti-Nigerianism would replace anti-colonialism. Through British “ways” the English-speaking Cameroonians acquired their Anglophone character, fairly distinct from that of their Francophone counterparts.

France administered Cameroon through the policy of **Assimilation**. Though placed as part of the French Colonial Empire, Cameroon maintained its autonomy as a mandated territory of the League of Nations. The French hoped to transform Cameroon as it did their other territories into French overseas. The policy of assimilation implied the turning of Africans into Frenchmen. That meant that Cameroonians of French expression came to regard France as their mother country. Indigenous administration was subordinated to that of the French, with little freedom allowed the traditional leaders. The French employed the policy of *corvée* and *indigenat* which greatly ostracized the people from the administration. This regional imbalance in administration caused the flight of Francophones in 1943, into the British territory. It was such an administrative problem that made a French administrator lament:

La question de la main d’œuvre demeure une des principales causes du

¹⁷ See Chiabi, “Background ...,” chapter 3; on education in British Cameroon, see, C. Courade and G. Courade, *Education in Anglophone Cameroon, 1915-1975* (Yaoundé, 1977).

¹⁸ Cameroons Report, *Annual Report* (1947), p.1.

mécontentement qui existe parmi la population autochtone. Elle a eu pour répercussion le départ en zone anglaise de nombreux indigènes originaires des chefferies limitrophes au Cameroun britannique.¹⁹

Even the loss of some 86 per cent of their recruited workers in the Bamileke region in 1944 did not reverse French brutal policies. Because the policy of assimilation saw Cameroon as a French territory in which transformation had to be undertaken, more investment was done in French Cameroon than in British Cameroon. Jacques Benjamin has shown this comparative investment advantage.²⁰ The French policy of education allowed for much colonial involvement. French was the medium of instruction and French culture the focus of education. French administrators mingled more with the Africans than did the British administrators. In the economic affairs, they were there; in the social sphere they were involved. This was reflected during the era of nationalism when *colons* like, Louis-Paul Aujoulat was actively involved in party politics in Cameroon.

Contrary to what the late Father Engelbert Mveng wrote in 1985 that Cameroon was not a by-product of colonization, it is clear that the Cameroon of today is primarily a product of colonial and Western influences. The Germans, after the Germano-Douala treaty of July 14, 1884, penetrated inland and demarcated territory of more than 520,000 sq. kilometres. The borders of the territory reflected in the words of Edwin Ardener, a “strategic fanning-out movement.”²¹ Once the Germans acquired Cameroon, they embarked upon expansion into the interior and by the time World War I broke out, they had delineated what could be called German Kamerun. German Kamerun was re-partitioned in 1916 into two Cameroons—one French and the other British. Britain and France set out to restructure their

¹⁹ Région du Mungo, *Rapport Annuel* (1942), p. 2.

²⁰ See his article, “The Impact of Federal Institutions ...,” in Kofele-Kale, *An African Experiment*, pp. 191-226.

²¹ Claude Welch. *Dream of Unity: Pan-Africanism and Political Unification in West Africa* (New York, 1966); on Father Mveng’s views, see his article, “Is there a Cameroonian Cultural Identity?” in Ministry of Information and Culture, *The Cultural Identity of Cameroon* (Yaoundé, 1985).

respective regions into divisions or circumscriptions for administrative purposes. Thus, while Cameroon was divided into Anglophone and Francophone regions, these regions were further divided into divisions and sub-divisions, which contributed to further balkanization. At independence, we inherited these borders and created new ones. Today, we have more divisions than we had at independence.

Redressing Imbalance and National Integration

Is it really possible to effect regional balance and bring about true integration? What in effect is going to be the outcome of this conference? Shall the results or findings of researchers be translated into policy by the policy-makers? This is not the first time that the important issues of regional balance and national integration in Cameroon will be addressed. Studies have been undertaken by different people and at different places. Willard R. Johnson's book, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentation Society*, 1970, falls in line with the subject under review. Ten years after, Ndiva Kofele-Kale published the research of many scholars based on Cameroon's attempt to build a "nation" in a book appropriately titled, *An Experiment in Nation Building: The Bilingual Cameroon Republic Since Reunification*, 1980. In 1985, a group of Cameroon scholars examined the question and problems of Cameroon's cultural identity in many areas - from art to language - and chronicled them in a book, titled, *The Cultural Identity of Cameroon*, 1985. These three books confirm that the issue of imbalance or fragmentation is not a new one.

Today, we look into the past to see how attempts have been made to redress imbalance and foster national integration. When we talk about redressing imbalance, what kind of imbalance do we mean? Political, Economic or Socio-cultural? Are we talking about redressing natural or historical imbalances? It would be extremely difficult to redress most natural imbalances. Regardless of man's efforts, the oil of Limbe, the gold of the east, the rubber of the forest region cannot be transferred to the Far-North province or the grassland regions. The great Cross River and the Sanaga River will forever remain features of the coastal region. Although the reversal of such features as rivers, hills, lakes, etc., is quite impossible, an attempt has been made to reverse the situation of the multiplicity of languages. Through the colonial languages, a lingua franca was established.

Cameroonians in British Cameroon adopted English as their lingua franca and those in French Cameroon adopted French. Cameroonians now were woven together around these two languages. At the level of the national government, an attempt was made to introduce national languages by radio in the 1960s. Although the attempt failed, a few “major” indigenous languages are still used over the radio at the provincial level. The pride for one’s own language, among other factors, has prevented the introduction of an indigenous language for all of Cameroon--an attempt at integrating languages or linguistic integration as Maurice Tadadjeu calls it.²²

In Cameroon, the major attempt at redressing the problems of imbalance and therefore fostering national integration began in the early 1960s. Prior attempts, however, need to be noted here. The early missionaries who came to Cameroon in the 1840s were concerned about the multiplicity of languages which posed a problem for their evangelization. Joseph Merrick, the first missionary to establish a permanent base in Cameroon, lamented the diversity of languages and ethnic groups and hoped to “unite all people in one common bond” making them “live like brethren” and promoting “the welfare of one another.”²³ Through his concern to Christianize, Merrick worked hard to teach English, then Esubu and later Douala so that Cameroonians could adopt a language that would integrate them. The Germans after colonization, introduced German as an official language. This was adopted by a few people and after the French and British took over, English and French replaced German and even obliterated it.

The earliest effort by Cameroonians to redress the regional imbalance was attempted by the nationalists of the late 1940s. In the British Cameroons, the members of the Cameroons Welfare Union who were mostly emigrants from the Francophone region, pushed for the unification of the two regions of Cameroon. In 1949 when the United Nations visiting mission came to Cameroon, the Cameroons National Federation which comprised both Anglophones and Francophones, presented a memorandum which included the idea of unification. Members of the *Unions des Populations*

²² See his, “For a Policy of Cameroonian Linguistic Integration: Extensive Trilingualism,” in Ministry of Information and Culture, *Cultural Identity*, pp. 178-192.

²³ See Joseph Merrick’s report 01) a “Tour of the Coastal Area in 1845.” in Richard Burton, *Abeokuta and the Cameroons Mountains*, vol. 2 (London, 1863), pp. 240-241; Chiabi, “Background ...,” p. 165

du Cameroun (U.P.C.) picked up on the issue of Unification and it became a cardinal point on their political agenda.

At independence, President Ahmadou Ahidjo and Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha (a Prime Minister of a non-independent territory) met in mid-July 1960 in the Southern Cameroons. According to Claude Welch, the two leaders agreed that reunification was to occur “on a federal basis adaptable to conditions peculiar to all sections of Cameroon.”²⁴ In October and December, 1960, the two leaders met again to discuss the division of powers between federal and state governments. Following the meeting, a joint communiqué was issued stipulating that the Federal government would exercise control over public freedoms, nationality, national defence, foreign affairs, higher education, immigration and emigration, Federal budget and Post and Telecommunications.²⁵ On April 24, 1961, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved October 1, 1961 as the date of termination of trusteeship for the Southern Cameroons, through federation with the Republic of Cameroon.”²⁶

Mid-1961 was an important year in the efforts towards national integration. In June 1961, a constitutional conference of Southern Cameroons parties held in Bamenda. At that meeting, the Southern Cameroons’ parties wanted to maintain a wide degree of autonomy. Foncha and others wanted to ensure that any future Cameroon federation would guarantee the status quo of the Southern Cameroons which in effect, meant the retention of its monetary, educational, judicial and administrative system as well as its legislative and police powers. Foncha also favoured a Southern Cameroons military force. In his proposals, it was apparent that the federation should be given only the reserved powers which were, at the time, exercised by the administering authority through the Commissioner for the Cameroons. “Reserved powers” therefore, implied partial integration.

From July 17-21, 1961, a constitutional conference was held at Foumban. Foumban was the place to truly begin to redress the imbalance caused by the balkanization of Cameroon by France and Britain. At Foumban, Foncha emphasized the existence of two cultures: “In our desire to rebuild the

²⁴ U. N. Document T/1556, p. 33.

²⁵ U. N. Document T/1556, p. 35; U. N. *The Two Alternatives*, pp. 13-15.

²⁶ See Resolution 1608 (XV) April 21, 1961

Kamerun nation we must not, however, forget the existence of the two cultures. We have, therefore, proposed a form of government which will keep the two cultures in the areas where they now operate and to blend them in the centre.”²⁷ Besides the emphasis on culture, Foncha stressed on the senate form of government but Ahidjo rejected it. Ahidjo called for a “close coming together” and an “intimate connection” between the federated states.²⁸ Ahidjo accepted many of the recommendations presented by the Southern Cameroons delegation but eventually implemented only those which did not alter his wish for a centralized federation. In fact, at Foumban, Ahidjo rejected Southern Cameroons’ proposal for dual nationality and emphasized that the Republic of Cameroon and the Southern Cameroons constituted “a single historic unit”. Ahidjo’s observation was indeed, a historical fact and a closer call for total integration; but at the time, it was rhetoric and demagoguery. The end product at Foumban was a strong centralized federation of Ahidjo’s creation and not the loose one that Foncha had hoped for. Foncha had hoped to maintain the Anglophone” and Francophone cultures. Ahidjo preferred an absorption or assimilation of the Anglophone region. Instead of harmony Foumban bred antagonism. Probably, if the constitutional talks at Foumban had been taken seriously together with the need for regional balance and national integration, Foumban would have been a veritable beginning in the well thought out process of redressing Cameroon’s imbalance and disparity.

In 1972, Ahidjo, who apparently all along saw reunification as a means to acquire Anglophone Cameroon, created a unitary state which violated the Foumban accord. The two states of West and East Cameroon were abolished. On the surface, this seemed as a positive move towards national integration, but critically examined, it was a move that only frustrated many Anglophones who seemed satisfied with national integration and regional balance through the federated states. The manner in which the unitary state was ushered in left little doubt that it was meant for more control and better centralization. The unitary states remained a political move and very little attempts were made to integrate or harmonize the instruments and systems

²⁷ Welch, *Dream of Unity*, p. 246

²⁸ *ibid.*

of the two states. 1972 further antagonized some leaders from the state of West Cameroon who saw in the unitary state, a betrayal of Foumban. Again, as in 1961, an opportunity was lost in redressing Cameroon's imbalance.

Following the promulgation of the 1972 constitution, the posts of Vice-president and Prime Minister were abolished. S. T. Muna, who was at the time Vice-president of the Republic and P.M. of West Cameroon, lost the posts and the second position in the government (as successor to the president). However, in March 1973, Muna was elected president of the National Assembly. By his position, he regained the position of second person in government, next to the president and apparent successor. This was not for long, since on June 30, 1975, Paul Biya was appointed Prime Minister of the Republic and it seemed plans were underway to review the constitution. In 1979, Law no. 79/02 of 29th June 1979 amended article 7, paragraph c of the constitution making the Prime Minister, the successor to the president in case of the death of the president. Was this move, which violated the 1961 constitution to ensure that the number one and two persons in the country must always come from the two different regions, a move towards redressing regional imbalance and/or national integration? In 1984, another move equally cast doubts on the regional status of Cameroon. On February 4, 1984, President Paul Biya signed Law no. 84-001 transforming the United Republic of Cameroon (of 1972) into the Republic of Cameroon. Again, was this a move to foster regional balance and national integration? The debate is open.

Conclusion

Forty-five years of British impact (even if it came through administrative integration with Nigeria) made its mark on Cameroonians on the west side of the Mungo just as 45 years of French influence did on those on the east side of the river. In analyzing the two major colonial powers, one African scholar, A. Adu Boahen, has maintained that the British left a better civil service than the French did. In bilingual Cameroon with the Anglo-Franco heritage, what Boahen expresses as fact seems to many, especially politicians, debatable. Yet, no debate on this or other issues of colonial heritage has been organized. We have instead believers in and adherents to this or that heritage who are determined to keep it so. This has in some degree led to frustration for those who firmly believe in a particular heritage and see that heritage

pushed aside, minimized or marginalized. Forty-five years, though not comparable to the colonial experience of many African countries, were sufficient to alter existing ways and introduce new ones that were adopted by the various peoples of Cameroon. These became part and practice of these people and many have even prided in them.

Have you met Cameroonians who use their colonial heritage of language to pride themselves in it and use it as a status symbol? Here is what sometimes obtains with some, at the university for example. There are English speakers who lecture in French as a matter of pride and status to demonstrate their bilingualism even though the class may have 50 percent English speakers and 50 percent French speakers who may prefer to follow up lectures in English in order to improve their English. On the other hand, there are French speakers who will not explain a single question to the English speakers in English, even in their offices, but meet these lecturers in British, American, and other English-speaking embassies or Official circles or when they apply for short courses or seminars to English-speaking countries, and you hear them speaking English (for status and to show that they are bilingual). At the heart of it all, each believes in their heritage. This only confirms the fact that the Cameroon of today is a product of two legacies. This historical fact cannot be erased.

Political name-changing in Cameroon has been inadequate to alter, cover up, obliterate, redress regional imbalance or bring about national integration. If we take off the “federal” or “united” from “Cameroon” that does not negate the fact that Cameroon underwent two separate evolutions and only united precipitately under compelling circumstances. To redress these imbalances and attempt national integration, we must take cognizance of both historical and natural factors. Even then, it is noteworthy that only certain imbalances can be attempted and that national integration is a Herculean task. Redressing regional imbalance and fostering national integration have sometimes been frustrated by political leaders and policy-makers who seek personal satisfaction and fail to take the interest of the nation at heart.

Consider the statement by the Prime Minister that was cited earlier--”scratch my back and I scratch your own.” This statement falls within the realm of political compensation for compliance with a particular party’s policies. It has been interpreted to mean that government would only redress the problems of regions that conform to the party’s policies. In this case,

regions with obvious needs and which have met the requirements for such institutions as schools, hospitals, post offices, etc., have not been “compensated” because they did not “scratch” the backs of the party bosses. Where then is the genuine attempt to redress regional imbalance and foster national integration?

Redressing regional imbalance and fostering genuine national integration calls for people with the will to redress those imbalances. The task calls for nationalists who are committed to the welfare of the nation as a whole and not politicians who reward particular regions for political loyalties. For over 40 years, the white leaders of South Africa practiced apartheid and fought against the integration of blacks and whites. It took De Klerk’s political will to do it and he reversed history. In the United States of America, the struggle of black civil rights movement took over 100 years. It took presidents with the political will of John F. Kennedy’ to work for the Civil Rights Act. Through this Act, blacks began a period of integration into the society.

To redress our imbalances and attempt a genuine national integration, we must begin with the political will and commitment to do so. Political rewardism of regions or groups must be replaced by a genuine development of the whole country. To do this, we must transfer our ethnic loyalties to the nation. Ethnic groups or cleavages must be replaced by interest groups. For years, we have put too much on “national” identity cards that emphasize ethnic groups rather than on professional cards that bring people into larger categories. Historians tell us that if we do not learn from the past, we are doomed to commit too many errors and even repeat the mistakes of the past. In many African countries, the best lesson many of our leaders have learnt from the past colonial experience, is “divide and rule” or “divide and stay in power”. This policy remains the cardinal cause of regional imbalance and lack of national integration in many of our African countries. Not until we realize this, can we talk of redressing regional imbalance and fostering national integration, a task which by its nature, can only be attempted, for if we have a truly “integrated” Cameroon, are we admitting that our traditional cultures are undesirable or are we saying that homogeneity is preferable to heterogeneity?

Chapter Four

The Effectiveness of Legal Instruments in Achieving Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon

C.N. Ngwasiri

The 1960 Investment Code

(i) Summary

The Code was designed to achieve a dual purpose: attract investment and assist in achieving the development objectives of the state. It offered four categories of incentives to business enterprises (Schedules A, B, C and D), corresponding to the activities of sectors where the government wanted to attract investments. These incentives consisted in exemption from taxes and custom duties for periods between ten and twenty-five years. Schedule A enterprises were allowed to import raw materials and capital goods duty-free for up to ten years, and their indirect taxes on finished goods for the first three years of production' were either reduced, or simply cancelled. These enterprises were not to be affected by new taxes, or by adverse changes in the rates of existing ones. Schedule B enterprises were entitled to Schedule A benefits and to exemption from taxes on profits for up to five years.

Companies in the mining and timber industries were exempted from paying royalties for the same period. Business organisations in Schedule C could negotiate agreements with the government under which they could be granted some, or all, Schedule B privileges. The government further provided a variety of guarantees including financial transfers for up to 25 years. The firms, for their part, undertook to maintain a certain minimum volume of production and to provide their employees with certain social amenities, including housing. Schedule D companies were those engaged in activities of particular importance to the long-term development goals of the state. They were granted Schedule C benefits and immunity to adverse tax changes and to new taxes for up to 25 years.

(ii) merits and demerits of the 1960 code

As Table A shows, by June 30, 1965, that is, just five years after the Code was instituted, 8,000 new jobs were made available by 38 new companies which had benefited from incentives under the Code. Their investments

totalled ten billion francs. This figure was almost quadrupled within the next four years to 38 billion francs and the number of companies rose to 133, generating a record 32,757 new jobs (Table B). And as we can see from Table C, by June 30, 1975, the Code had attracted investments from 218 companies totalling 84 billion francs.

These statistics testify to the fact that the incentives provided by the Code successfully appealed to many companies and resulted in a very large increase in the volume of investments in the country. However, these figures are far from suggesting that the 1960 Code also succeeded in achieving regional equilibrium in the location of the new enterprises. Table C provides sectoral and regional distribution of industries as of June 30, 1975, as well as the percentages representing each sector of the economy and region of the country. It shows that over half of the industries approved by the National Investment Commission under the 1960 Code were located in the Littoral Province, and more than one-quarter in the Centre-South Province. The two provinces alone thus accounted for over three-quarters of the industries existing in the country at the end of the first 15 years of the Code. Although these industries were more or less evenly distributed among the four sectors listed in Table C, the Code has thus clearly failed to bring about balanced development of the regions of the country.

The regional disequilibrium situation was even worse on the eve of the 1984 Code (see Table D). The number of enterprises which benefited from incentives under the Code had admittedly risen from 218 in 1978 to 452 in 1984, that is, more than double in just 7 years, but the number of those located in the East Province had fallen from 15 to 3 during the same period. On the other hand, enterprises located in the Littoral Province rose from 116 in 1975 to 262 in 1984, recording an increase of 125.85%. The lopsided location of industrial enterprises in favour of the Littoral and Centre-South Provinces, where a record 81 % of the industries were based by June 30, 1984 (Table D), shows that after almost 25 years, government policy of trying to achieve regional balance, through the Investment Code was a disaster. For a quarter century, therefore, regional inequalities against which government had waged sustained battle, were asserting themselves even more forcefully.

A number of reasons have been advanced for the failure of the 1960 Code to reverse regional disequilibrium. They include unnecessarily long administrative procedures that applicants for the Code's incentives had to

meet. Lack of clearly defined criteria for placing enterprises in one or other of the “Schedules” has also been blamed. It has also been argued that not enough incentives were given to Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs) and the Cameroonization of jobs was given only scant attention. The periods for which some of the benefits were accorded were too long (20 to 25 years), and the absence of effective control mechanisms led to misdirection and misuse of resources (Ngwasiri, 1984). After almost 25 years, government thought that the 1960 Code had outlived its usefulness and had to be replaced. A new Code was thus introduced in 1984.

The 1984 Investment Code

i) Summary

The main objective of the 1984 Code was to encourage and stimulate economic activity (section 1) and contribute to the balanced development and increased competitiveness of all sectors of the national economy (section 5 (2)). The granting or maintenance of the benefits of the Code, may be subject to the latter objective being attained. The Code was extremely liberal in some of its provisions.

Section 9 (i) allowed individuals and corporations of foreign nationality operating in the country the freedom to repatriate both profits and capital. They could also repatriate the proceeds of their businesses in case of sale or winding-up, in the currency of the original investment. The danger here was that such a provision might play into the hands of some foreign investors who, after reaping substantial returns on their investments, could move out of the country leaving gaps in their sectors of activity which might be difficult to fill. The provision also stated that foreign businesses were subject to the same taxes and the same employer obligations as their Cameroonian counterparts, provided Cameroonian businesses operating in the countries concerned were given the same treatment. The obvious demerit of this provision was that Cameroon was likely to be the loser in the long run vis-à-vis certain country which had far more nationals benefiting from the concessions in Cameroon than there were Cameroonians granted similar advantages in those countries. This was the case for the Nigerian, Chadian, Senegalese, French and American business communities in Cameroon. Probably the only country in which the balance tilted in favour of Cameroon was Gabon. The reciprocity proviso therefore served only as some kind of

insurance for Cameroonian businessmen who might venture abroad. Section 12 (i) stated that the industrial products of any individual or corporation may, irrespective of the Schedule under which the producer fell, be exempted from export duties. The problem with selective benefits was that they were not aimed at any particular investor, and were therefore not incentives, since no potential investor was in a position to know whether he would benefit from them.

(ii) Incentives

The incentives under the Code were categorised under four Schedules: A, B, C and D. “Priority Undertakings”, were those which helped develop sectors considered as priority by the government and must be capable of contributing in a considerable and lasting way to an improvement in the balance of payments in their sector of activity. Their investments must not be less than 2,500 million francs. Undertakings in both Schedules must not be less than 2,500 million francs. Undertaking in both Schedules must, in addition, fulfil one of the following conditions:

- (i) be located in border or non-port areas, or where access and supply conditions were particularly difficult;
- (ii) Undertake economic activities which yielded a high value added;
- (iii) Give preference to adapted technologies and use large amounts of skilled local manpower and guarantee its training.

“Schedule A” undertakings were entitled to the following benefits under the Code: (a) five per cent reduction on import duties and taxes;

- (b) exemption from duties and taxes on local purchases of:
 - (i). equipment, material, machines and tools directly necessary for the manufacturing and processing of products;
 - (ii) spare parts;
 - (iii) raw materials;
 - (iv) products for packing or wrapping finished or manufactured products.

“Schedule B” undertakings also enjoyed these advantages for the same period of ten years and, in addition, were exempted from paying conveyance taxes on the acquisition of buildings needed under their investment programme.

Small and Medium-size Enterprises, in the “Schedule C” category were those in which job-creating expenses were relatively low and whose total investments were less than 500 million francs, with a Cameroonian shareholding of at least 65%. They granted all “Schedule A” benefits for ten years. This could be extended to 15 years if the company was set up outside areas with a high industrial concentration. In addition, they were entitled to the following financial benefits for eight years:

- (a) exemption from taxes on share capital;
- (b) exemption from tax on credit distribution;
- (c) exemption from registration fees;
- (d) exemption from company tax;
- (e) exemption from tax on industrial and commercial profits, effective from the year in which the first sale or service is effected.

The fourth and last category of business enterprises came under “Schedule D”, defined by the Code in section 29 as undertakings which operated in economic areas recognised as strategic in the implementation of the government’s economic, social and cultural development plan. These companies could be requested to sign establishment conventions with the state for maximum periods of 15 years. They must undertake to invest at least 15 billion francs in their operations and were entitled to the benefits granted to “Priority Undertakings”. In addition, they were placed under a stable tax regime for the duration of their agreements. They could, however, apply to benefit from favourable changes in the tax laws effected while their agreements were still in force (section 35). The maximum period for which benefits could be granted under the Code was 15 years, as against 25 years in the case of the former Code.

We have already noted that balanced development was one of the key objectives of the 1984 Code. Those provisions were aimed at attracting investments into remote or not easily accessible areas, and made location in such areas one of the conditions for the classification of special or priority undertakings (sections 22 and 24). Incentives earmarked for at least three of the four categories of business undertakings in the 1984 Code were directed at achieving balanced development. First, we have seen that in section 22 of the Code, Schedule A undertakings were accorded preferential treatment if they located in border regions or in areas where access and supply conditions were particularly difficult. Secondly, Schedule B ones were also entitled to

benefits if they located in non-port areas (that is away from the Littoral region) and which used technologies that employed skilled local manpower (section 24). Preferential treatment was also given to SMEs, which under the 1984 Code were undertakings in which at least 65% of the equity was in Cameroonian hands (section 26)

It has been argued that as far as the records of private investment in Cameroon go, it is difficult, if not impossible for the government to realise its objectives of 'balanced' and 'self-reliant' development by depending only on private capital. It has thus been suggested (Ndongko, 1986) that the State has to reorient the activities of its financial and credit institutions such as FOGAPE, BCD, and SNI, etc. with a view to ensuring that they invest or participate in enterprises that wished to locate in backward or less-developed regions of the country. These institutions have been blamed for becoming so profit-oriented and thereby forgetting their political role as, by so doing, they have helped to reinforce rather than reduce regional inequalities.

Although the Cameroonian government has held steadfastly to balanced and self-reliant development since independence, which the 1960 Code failed to achieve, the government has not included provisions in the new Code making it mandatory for business enterprises to set up in the remote and less developed areas of the country as a precondition for being accorded certain benefits under the Code. It has also not excluded foreign businesses from certain areas of economic activity in the name of balanced and self-reliant development.

Like the 1960 Code, that of 1984 also failed to bring about balanced development of the different regions. Although balanced development had not been achieved, Cameroon maintained a high rate of growth averaging 7% up to the mid-1980s. In 1986, however, the period of prosperity suddenly came to a halt. The country was caught in an unprecedented and severe economic recession. The government, which had rejected the idea of going to the Bretton Woods institutions for assistance, was forced to conclude a stand-by arrangement with the International Monetary Fund in 1987 and a structural adjustment loan with The World Bank in 1988.

Cameroon thereby undertook to fulfil a number of conditionalities as part of the structural adjustment programme. Some of them included private sector reforms embracing the principles of a free market economy in which government would no longer be involved in the direct production of goods and services, Public Service reforms aimed at reducing the size of a bloated

public sector and increasing its efficiency, reform of the parastatal sector through privatisation, etc. The high-water mark of these reforms came in 1990 when a total of 49 texts (26 Laws and 23 Decrees) were enacted to reform the economy (SOPECAM, 1990). One of the texts was the 1990 Investment Code.

The 1990 Investment Code

Enacted in the heart of the economic recession and during the period of execution of the structural adjustment programme, the 1990 Code's main objective to encourage and promote productive investments in Cameroon (section 1) with the valorisation of natural resources as a priority (section 1 (2) (7)). Yesterday's policy of paying more attention to raising the level of the latter has clearly been abandoned. Even though one still hears mention of "national integration" in public speeches today, government seems to be implying that to achieve it through regional balance involves paying a price it cannot now afford.

After 30 years of trying without recording the least success, Cameroon has thus, at least for the moment, abandoned the policy of using the law as a tool for realising the balanced development of its different regions. The obvious question to ask is whether national integration, which has not been similarly abandoned, can be achieved without resort to the law? Our opinion is that the economic and social reasons behind the failure to attain regional balance are more important than the legal ones. More gains could thus be made by maximising the economic exploitation of the comparative advantages of the backward regions of the country. We thus agree with Professor Georges Courade (1994) that the ushering in of a new kind of State is called for, and add that the new State has to address the question of national integration in more creative ways than harping on a hollow concept.

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Table A: Companies Approved under the Investment Code as of June 30, 1965

Sector of Economic Act	Location of Firm	Number	Amount of Investment Pro	New Jobs
Power-based industries	/	/	/	/
Mineral products industry	Littoral	9	1.735.000.000	346
Textile and Clothing	West Cameroon, East, North and Littoral	2	192.000.000	385
Timber Industries	Centre South	8	1.061.000.000	1649
Food Industries	West and Littoral	5	3.400.000.000	1875
Miscellaneous industries	(x)	14	3.965.000.000	3795
Total		38	10.393.000.000	8049

Source: Second annual Report of the National Credit Council, 1946-1966, p.107.

Table B: Types, Location and Volumes of Investments Under the Investment Codes as of June 30, 1969

Sector	Location	Volume of Investment
Energy Products	Littoral	10.854.000.000
Primary products and Processing industries	Littoral West	10.847.000.000
Aluminium production	Littoral	8.327.000.000
Forest industries	Centre, South East, West	3.200.000.000
Textile and shoe production	West, Littoral and North	2.710.000.000
Chemical industries	West and Littoral	489.000.000
Total		37.927.000.000

Source: "Investment and Economic Development: Cameroon", Bulletin de l'Afrique Noire (Paris, July 1970), pp. 12 & 251-254.

Table C: Sectoral and Regional Distribution of Industries as of 30th June 1975

Sector Region	Forest Industr y	Agro Industr y	Manufacturin g Industry	Basic Industr y	Regiona l total	%
Littoral	8	18	52	38	116	53. 2
Centre/Sout h	34	5	9	9	57	26. 1
East	15	/	/	/	15	6.8
West	3	/	1	3	7	3.3
North	/	4	1	2	7	3.3
South West	4	3	4	3	14	6.4
North West	/	2	/	/	2	0.0 9
Sector total	64	32	67	55	218	100
%	29.35	14.65	30.7	25.3		

La Création Du Territoire National Camerounais A L'épreuve De La Crise Et De Sa Gestion

Georges Courade

Le territoire national n'existe pas en soi; il se construit et se détruit en permanence, même dans les plus anciennes nations stabilisées sur une longue période. Au Cameroun, ce qui fait office de territoire national dans le discours ne peut être considéré que comme un objet virtuel que chacun s'emploie à construire et à détruire dans le même mouvement en 1995. En revendiquant son droit inaliénable à la différence tout en réaffirmant un nationalisme verbal face aux non-camerounais, en exigeant un traitement égalitaire dans l'accès à "l'ascenseur social" tout en demandant des discriminations positives, s'il se sent minoritaire culturellement, défavorisé économiquement ou sous-cotais. Que faire pour avancer dans ces conditions, dans la construction d'une nation alors que l'ascenseur est en panne? Le diplôme scolaire n'assure plus un emploi automatique dans une fonction publique aux droits régaliens. On a beau multiplier les rotations ministérielles, géographiquement sélectionnées, pour permettre une redistribution de la rente, celle-ci a en partie disparu. La crise a remis en cause le système d'assimilation réciproque des élites locales, marchandes et scolaires constituées en classe dominante, qui a connu son apogée autour des années 80. Et les ajustements que subit depuis plus de cinq ans le pays ont renvoyé la "petite bourgeoisie" (les classes moyennes citadines) à une grande précarité. La "politique du ventre", qui a fait du Cameroun un modèle presque parfait en Afrique, s'est révélée être contre-productive pour l'intégration nationale à l'heure où se sont invitées sur la scène politique, une presse qui se proclame "indépendante", des partenaires ethno-régionalistes qui s'opposent dans la violence et plus de 120 partis politiques maniant la dynamite des frustrations anciennes réactualisées.

Le paysage politique actuel n'est plus celui de la fin des années cinquante malgré les apparences. Et si les données géopolitiques de fond restent, les rapports économie-Etat-sociétés ont profondément changé et continuent à changer de manière rapide. L'histoire africaine des constructions étatiques a vu le triomphe récent de la "raison géographique" sur la "raison

démographique”, de l’espace-ressource draine et borne des colonisateurs sur le contrôle des populations des empires précoloniaux et des chefferies. Il reste pourtant quelque chose de cette approche africaine précoloniale dans l’appréhension des rapports entre population et ressources, dans l’affirmation d’une “frontière agricole” inexistante ou dans la faible adhésion des technocrates à la planification des naissances, qualifiée ici de “parente responsable”. L’espace du politique pour la Malone des Camerounais se décline - faut-il le rappeler? - en de multiples allégeances emboîtées avec une domination absolue du terroir, du local et du rural. Ceci est en contradiction avec la raison économique qui oblige à penser en termes de village planétaire et en constitution de vastes territoires de plus en plus urbanisés “sans frontières”. Le lieu d’identification idéologique à l’échelle moyenne, se trouve être l’ethnie, avatar d’une histoire réécrite par la colonisation, les affrontements et les “élites”. Au-delà, les espaces de reconnaissance délimitant un dedans et un dehors ont un contenu mal défini et restent fluides, sauf pour la frange éduquée de la population qui s’est emparée, à sa manière, de l’héritage colonial. Au Cameroun, on se “pose” par exemple, en Anglophone à partir du discriminant de ta langue, des institutions, conduites, comportements et règles britanniques telles qu’elles furent “tropicalisées”, souvent après l’indépendance. Et les critères implicites pour s’affirmer camerounais demeurent encore bien problématiques.

Les lieux habites, exploites, appropriés matériellement et symboliquement, qui constituent le véritable cadre de vie, servent donc de références fortes aux individus et groupes peu sécurisés par des “identités politiques” dont la profondeur historique ne dépasse pas la génération. Faut-il par conséquent toujours représenter, le Cameroun géopolitique comme un triangle sans discontinuités majeures polarisé par un Sud utile? Des forces centrifuges ont fait voler en éclat ce schéma simpliste.

Le Processus d’intégration par l’approche Spatiale

Espace-contenant et contenu-territoire (1)

Ce qui semble constituer le territoire n’a pas d’existence au sens plein du terme parce qu’il a été borne et qu’il a pu être représenté par des cartes topographiques qui ne sont qu’une construction simplifiée du réel. Ce qui se voudrait “territoire national” a une étendue mesurée que notaires et greffiers

de l'espace découpent, compartimentent en "unités administratives" sans faire disparaître le flou des marges et des marches de l'espace de l'adhésion à un projet national qui n'est porteur de rien d'autre que la pérennité d'un Etat postcolonial sans autre discours que celui de la peur de la dislocation. Encore faut-il souligner que ce bornage extérieur reste objet de litiges comme le montre le conflit trentenaire Cameroun/Nigeria le long des 1200 km de lignes de partage des deux espaces étatiques pour des raisons qui ne sont pas que pétrolières. La polarisation guerrière autour de ce conflit participe de l'effort de cristallisation de la limite entre espaces étatiques comme réalité, mentale aux yeux des habitants des deux pays. On amène ainsi chacun à tracer une ligne mentale ferme entre des ilots mouvants dans les mangroves du Rio-del-Rey ou du lac Tchad qu'arpenteurs et topographes allemands n'avaient pas reportée, et pour cause, sur la carte Moisel de 1913, la première carte topographique du Cameroun!

L'enseignement de la géographie participe aussi de cet effort de transformation mentale du contenant en contenu. Telle province, entité administrative, devient souvent par un glissement de sens une "région" au sens de la géographie vidalienne du terme alors que les bases de la cohérence et de l'homogénéité sont loin d'être établies. Ce que l'on appelle la régionalisation de l'espace camerounais semble s'y prêter, les bases physiques (altitude, climat, réseau hydrographique) permettant la construction d'un espace cohérent autonome que ne semble pas toujours conforter les structures socioculturelles, l'organisation économique ou l'influence urbaine fragiles, insaisissables et très changeantes. L'effort de désignation des lieux, des découpages administratifs et des éléments constitutifs de l'espace et du paysage (2) par des noms de caractère "national" (encore qu'on ait des difficultés à savoir comment trouver des appellations et des graphies incontestablement "nationales"), s'il constitue une étape nécessaire à la mise en place d'une trame ne crée pas, ipso facto, l'identification et la mémoire qui en font des espaces vécus, appropriés, non interchangeables. Tout ceci peut faire croire à l'existence "d'êtres géographiques" qui ne sont que des "objets géographiques" non identifiés. On confond ici espace délimité et contrôlé partiellement et espace ayant un sens commun pour l'ensemble des habitants, de ceux qui l'exploitent comme de ceux qui s'en sentent les occupants légitimes. Le présuppose géopolitique tenace qui veut que l'on étudie de la même manière un pays constitue depuis des siècles et un autre dont l'existence est menacée et où l'appareil d'Etat ne contrôle qu'une faible

portion de l'espace borne conduit à des contresens particulièrement néfastes pour l'analyse qui nous préoccupe,

La variété des voles de l'intégration nationale

L'intégration nationale pose question avec la crise et la globalisation économique par les seules forces du marché un peu partout. En France ou l'on peut avancer que l'Etat a été le creuset de la nation, les difficultés d'intégration sont nombreuses si bien que le droit du sol pour appartenir à la communauté nationale est progressivement remis en cause. Les grands acteurs de l'intégration comme le système scolaire, l'Etat providence, le service public ou la conscription ont du mal à assurer leur fonction dans la mesure où une partie importante de la population croit moins qu'avant aux valeurs communes diffusées. Le système scolaire, qui n'a pas démérité, n'est plus vécu comme ascenseur social et la laïcité, fondement de l'assimilation scolaire aux idéaux républicains, est battue en brèche par un communautarisme de repli en période d'exclusion. Le système social peine à assurer à tous assurance, assistance et sécurité face aux risques de l'existence (maladie, handicap, chômage, assurance-vieillesse). La notion de service public qui tente d'effacer par la péréquation des tarifs et la fiscalisation des charges, inégalités sociales et spatiales d'accès physique et économique a un certain nombre de services (transports, télécommunications, fourniture d'énergie etc.) entre en contradiction avec la nécessité d'équilibrer les comptes quand l'Etat ne peut plus prendre à sa charge des déficits toujours plus grands. Au total, se grippent les processus d'intégration qui ont jusqu'ici fonctionné, remettant en cause l'adhésion de fortes minorités aux valeurs nationales. L'augmentation continue du pouvoir d'achat et le plein emploi constituent aussi, faut-il le rappeler, des facteurs d'intégration irremplaçables comme le montre clairement le refus d'ajustement des salaires français des "secteurs protégés" en 1995 pour reprendre les termes du discours néolibéral qualifié en France, de "pensée unique"!

Le modèle d'intégration français n'a sans doute pas d'équivalent européen aussi caricatural. Il est sans doute aussi celui qui, dans son esprit, est le plus opposé à la mondialisation en cours. IL n'empêche qu'il a inspiré implicitement ou explicitement d'autres expériences, en Afrique notamment. Une nation peut se construire par différents cheminements sachant que les rapports de force et la violence légitime ou illégitime y ont une large part et à

partir d'une idéologie fondée sur des institutions et valeurs communes acceptées, imposées ou arrachées. Le processus d'intégration peut être plus dynamique et se fonder sur un ascenseur social, une ambition et un espoir partagé largement même s'il ne se réalise pas pour tous comme le "rêve américain". Les pays neufs ou l'espace reste encore projet et potentialité et la société encore malléable dans ses composantes si certains verrous sautent, peuvent se lancer dans ce défi (Brésil). Ne peut se qualifier de "neuf" cependant un pays de création récente, mais dont la société est verrouillée en permanence par la recherche d'un équilibre, une volonté de partage, qui inhibe entrepreneurs et militants. De ce point de vue, le Cameroun est un Etat récent cherchant à se construire comme nation au cœur de sociétés locales qui le tolèrent tant qu'il dispense des bienfaits sans l'utiliser pour accoucher d'une réalité qui les dépasse.

La nation peut résulter dans une étape préliminaire du poids conséquent d'une religion (Pakistan) ou de la volonté hégémonique d'un groupe (d'une ethnie ou d'une civilisation?) majoritaire (Vietnam) ayant acquis une légitimité par la voie d'une guerre d'indépendance et d'une lutte anti-impérialiste fondatrice. Certaines guerres de libération ont soude la génération qu'elle a libérée des jougs de la colonisation. Ce phénomène n'a que peu joué quand l'indépendance a été octroyée. L'exemple algérien montre cependant que ceci n'est en rien un acquis durable quand la génération qui a accède au pouvoir a la faveur de l'indépendance est incapable d'offrir un projet d'avenir aux plus jeunes! L'existence d'Etats précoloniaux et de formes d'organisation politiques plus élaborées que le lignage rend sans doute plus aisée la marche vers l'Etat-nation, mais il ne s'agit pas d'un "avantage comparatif" considérable. Rares sont les nations qui n'ont pas connu de guerre civile indiquant au fer rouge un choix dominant non consensuel: guerre de sécession américaine ou révolution jacobine française. Et les vieilles nations d'Europe montrent qu'il reste, à l'heure des regroupements continentaux, des minorités ou des communautés qui se sentent frustrées dans la mesure où on leur a imposé des choix qui ne furent acceptés que par une contrainte qui n'a pas été intériorisée ou transmise de génération en génération. Ces lieux génériques, importants dans les vieilles nations, sont de différentes natures dans un pays comme le Cameroun. S'il y a un monument (discute) de l'unification à Yaoundé, à côté de la résidence de France, le médaillon de Saker à Limbe, l'entrée de la grande case à Bandjoun sont aussi des traces

symboliques d'un passe à assumer dans sa totalité que les historiens camerounais ont de la peine à construire, comme le montre l'incapacité de l'école historique camerounaise à mettre à leur juste place les hommes de son indépendance (4). La transmission de cette mémoire totale via l'éducation reste un des éléments fondamentaux du système d'intégration. Références, langue, codes, célébrations et conduites sont ainsi légués et reformulés en fonction des aspirations d'une société civile prompte à retirer son adhésion. S'il n'y a donc pas de modèle idéologique, d'itinéraire oblige ou d'acteurs privilégiés dans cette construction (les élites sont cependant le produit le plus visible du système de sélection nationale), un certain nombre d'outils participent plus ou moins à l'intégration des populations: éducation, langue, sélection des meilleurs, protection des plus faibles, transmission de la mémoire, rituels politiques, cadre administratif ayant un contenu, lieux symboliques, etc. Ce ne sont toutefois que des outils que tout un chacun doit investir et porter pour produire des liens "réels".

Ces outils produisent du territoire et en façonnent son usage concret et symbolique. L'espace vécu et produit sont donc au cœur de cette problématique avec comme fondement l'organisation des échanges de toutes natures dans le champ national. Réseaux relationnels, lieux centraux ou décalés, voisinages conviviaux ou conflictuels, éloignements et rapprochements physiques ou culturels, espaces-tampons ou marches vont donc rythmer un territoire en construction. Et cette construction pourra supposer remaillage autant que densification des mailles existantes.

Décongélation, régressions

On a laissé se développer une certaine confusion entre espace étatique, portion de terre ou d'océan ou un Etat exerce sa souveraineté et tente de s'en assurer le contrôle et territoire forge autour de références communes différentes de celles des territoires voisins. Cela n'a pourtant pas échappé aux premiers dirigeants qui ont pu mesurer la force des tentations centrifuges de type ethno-régionaliste avant même que la guerre du Biafra ne vienne en apporter une éclatante confirmation. L'intangibilité des frontières garantie par la "sainte alliance" des Etats soumis à une même menace et par leurs protecteurs internationaux vint donc "stabiliser" ces espaces étatiques, sans pour autant en consolider l'existence. Cette situation a perduré jusqu'à l'indépendance érythréenne, première brèche à un dogme jusque-là

intouchable. La marginalisation géopolitique africaine avec l'effondrement des blocs et les nouveaux ressorts du capitalisme international moins fondé sur le contrôle des ressources de base a fait le reste au niveau international. Unilever s'est ainsi débarrassé de ses plantations industrielles dans la province du Sud-Ouest du Cameroun.

La violence étatique utilisée pour discipliner et contrôler nombre de populations contestant les frontières léguées par le colonisateur ne semble plus aujourd'hui être de mise au nom des "droits de l'homme", du contrôle démocratique ou du "droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes". Ces grands principes affichent, reste à savoir, et c'est l'essentiel, l'interprétation qui peut en être faite. Et ici, l'on se heurte à l'ethnicité, invention du colonialisme pour diviser selon beaucoup, valeur politique positive pour M. CAHEN (5). Une nation peut se constituer, sans doute, à partir d'un cadre ethnique quand il a su produire une culture attractive pour des éléments non accultures, les liens biologiques étant transcendés s'ils ont véritablement existé. Dans le cas contraire, la question des rapports majorité/minorités se trouve nécessairement posée. La solution des quotas régionaux pour l'accès aux postes et aux fonctions d'autorité, adoptée par le régime Ahidjo au Cameroun, est la mise en musique d'une vision (réaliste?) utilitariste et minimaliste de l'Etat-nation postulant la fin d'un nationalisme mythique (6). Par ailleurs, la globalisation des économies semble appeler des regroupements régionaux pour créer des marchés de taille suffisante, réaliser des économies d'échelle, éviter la multiplication d'équipements surdimensionnés, etc. La fin du protectionnisme mercantile postcolonial appelle également une mise en ordre de marche des économies nationales sur la base des compétences avérées et donc, la mise au rencard du système des discriminations positives. On se trouve donc devant des contradictions et la nécessité d'imaginer de nouvelles formes du politique pour répondre à de nouvelles aspirations sans compromettre la viabilité des unités en création. Comment cela peut-il se passer? Les politiques d'ajustement structurel ont enfin déstabilisé Etats et appareils d'Etat qui ont voulu être des bâtisseurs de territoire au forceps. Les Etats indépendants africains sont très vite apparus comme la colonne vertébrale, les régulateurs et les animateurs des espaces dont ils avaient hérité. Pour y exercer toutes les prérogatives régaliennes (maintien de la sécurité, défense, collecte de l'impôt, justice), pour les contrôler par un encadrement administratif et social de plus en plus serré, mais aussi pour les "mettre en valeur". Quelles étapes faut-il franchir pour

passer d'un espace-contenu a un territoire enfin national dans le cas d'espèce de ces Etats qui doivent le produire, dans le contexte actuel? On peut mesurer grossièrement des progrès de l'intégration nationale à plusieurs indicateurs:

1) L'Etat assure sa fonction de greffier du territoire en nommant et en délimitant des espaces sur des bases crédibles et il s'emploie à en diffuser l'image cartographique dans les écoles et le pays avec un certain succès;

2) IL contrôle effectivement l'étendue ainsi délimitée par l'exercice de ses fonctions régaliennes et la population ne conteste pas la légitimité de l'usage qu'il fait de la violence pour arriver à cette fin;

3) Par le projet de société qu'il met en œuvre et par sa gestion économique, l'Etat transforme nombre de potentialités en ressources et s'assure d'une redistribution de celles-ci selon des modalités majoritairement acceptées;

4) Ascenseur social et gestion du territoire lui permettent de faire émerger des lieux et des acteurs porteurs d'un projet de société civile spécifique articulé sur un réseau urbain produisant une citoyenneté et une citoyenneté dégagée des pesanteurs identitaires de nature bio-culturaliste.

Ces éléments définissent un cadre normatif qu'il faut relativiser et préciser dans le cas du Cameroun. Parti unique ou multipartisme, l'exclusion de la sphère du pouvoir dans toutes ses composantes est jugée ici intolérable, même si elle résulte d'une procédure démocratique. Les intellectuels, universitaires notamment, ne savent pas ainsi garder ce recul qui en ferait des "guetteurs" pour le long terme. Tout arbitrage reste donc difficile s'il n'est pas, par avance, implicitement accepté par un travail des esprits ou une soumission mandataire. Ceci explique que l'exercice du pouvoir à différents niveaux, délicat, reste profondément marqué par la logique néo-patrimoniale, les accusations et les dénonciations, une recherche de consensus profondément blaisée par des manœuvres de toutes natures en coulisse, n'excluant ni la menace, ni l'assassinat. L'arbitraire, les rumeurs et l'absence d'information alimentent des frustrations réelles ou fausses qu'il convient de réduire. Tout ceci occupe une énergie et des moyens sans commune mesure

avec les résultats obtenus et rend quelque peu fantomatique la vole démocratique pourtant affichée. Les lourds héritages de la période Ahidjo comme les effets du bras de fer régime/opposition de 1990-92 expliquent les reculs enregistrés et l'immobilisme pesant actuel.

Les Pratiques De L'intégration Au Cameroun

Le processus d'intégration nationale part d'une donne qui est vécu d'une certaine manière au point que sa perception en déforme l'appréhension scientifique comme politique. Il a eu un rythme plus ou moins rapide dans le temps et se renforce ou régresse selon les circonstances. Modalités et processus qui en facilitent l'accouchement se situent sur un gradient qui va de l'imposition autoritaire à l'obtention de l'adhésion ou à la diffusion spontanée de l'idée par des relais. La constitution d'un référentiel mental national et de groupes diffusant ce modèle fait toujours l'objet d'affrontements et de manipulations. Au Cameroun, l'Etat-nation ne se construit pas selon des règles faciles à comprendre au deuxième ou au troisième degré. Etat, sociétés civiles et groupes intermédiaires se disputent l'enjeu que constitue la construction nationale dans des jeux d'enchères, voire de surenchères permanentes. Rien d'étonnant à cela puisque la légitimité de la prise de pouvoir semble en découler.

Plusieurs ordres spatiaux derrière un jardin "à la française"

L'espace dont a hérité l'Etat camerounais résulte des découpages coloniaux allemand et franco-britannique, la réunification ayant dissocié la Northern province (partie de l'Adamaoua au Nigeria). La colonisation a donné un contenu, un trace au territoire tout en essayant d'arranger dans un puzzle géant toute une série de lieux et de sociétés se vivant comme différents à l'échelle locale. Bref, elle a transformé un paysage touffu, non transparent en un jardin à la française ou à l'anglaise sans se soucier des logiques sous-jacentes pouvant conduire à d'autres formes d'emboitements, de regroupements d'espaces entre eux. La postcolonie a renforcé ce dessein en brouillant les cartes puisque utilisant la "légitimité indigène" pour reconstruire ce passe qui se dérobe maintenant aux yeux de tous par une surconsommation d'ethnicité. Le contenant est l'œuvre de l'histoire

antérieure qui a accouché de formes politiques qui vont d'organisations très centralisées à des sociétés déléguant très peu de pouvoir à quelques individus sous contrôle communautaire: chefferies, lamidats ou sultanats dans un cas, secrètes dites acéphales dans l'autre. Le concret de l'espace fort dans le premier cas, reste faible dans le second. Avant la colonisation, le champ spatial était peu structuré. Il était composé d'espaces flous - ides parfois organisés, autour des lamidats laissés par Ousmane Dan Fodio, du sultanat bamoum ou des grandes chefferies rivales et hétérogènes des Grassfields (Nso, Mankon, Aghem, Bali Nyonga, Kom, Bafou ou Bandjoun pour ne citer que les plus étendues). C'est que ces groupes, rarement très nombreux, ne devaient pas relever le défi d'une survie sédentaire avec des techniques particulièrement contraignantes comme ce fut le cas en Asie. Encore que l'on puisse s'interroger sur le déterminisme prêté à une nature qui parut difficile aux premiers colonisateurs allemands.

Les produits géopolitiques actuels résultent d'un long travail des sociétés sur elles-mêmes et restent peu élucidés en termes de science politique. Les formes de pouvoir, leurs modalités de régulation étalent et sont remis sur le métier en permanence comme les règles non écrites ou les conduites qualifiées abusivement de "traditions et coutumes" comme s'il n'y avait pas eu une histoire, même si celle-ci reste encore à faire. Que l'on cherche à récupérer cette histoire antérieure pour lui faire énoncer ce qu'elle n'a pas pour fonction de dire n'appartient pas au registre de la science. Que ce référentiel suppose vienne créer un sentiment de destin commun entre personnes et groupes relevé d'un travail idéologique. Diversité des cultures, richesse ou faiblesse du Cameroun? Pour la construction nationale, c'est un défi, défi d'autant plus important que les groupes linguistiques sont très nombreux, leurs apparentements, sources de discussion. Quant à l'ethnie, elle est d'abord une réalité en creux, un lieu de reconnaissance mutuelle par rapport aux gens extérieurs, indifférents ou hostiles. Si elle est le produit d'une histoire d'affrontements, de connivences et d'alliances, elle est aussi une construction idéologique réactivée quand les politiques en éprouvent le besoin. Les tensions interethniques traduisent les bouffées de chaleur d'espaces disputés, appropriés pour les uns, allégués pour les autres: Arabes Choa/Kotoko, Kirdi/Fulbé, Baya/Fulbé, Mbo/Bamiléké, Bamoum/Bamiléké, Bakweri/Bamenda, etc. L'Etat colonial et postcolonial a joué sur ce clavier suscitant ou ressuscitant l'ethnisme en assurant sa régulation. En 1995, difficile de ne pas voir la poudrière ethnique derrière le

multipartisme. Avec la crise et la bataille pour un nouveau partage du pouvoir, l'ethnie est au cœur des débats camerounais actuels, qu'il s'agisse de l'instrumentaliser, de la rejeter en enfer et d'en réguler les manifestations. Et peu d'institutions sont à l'abri de cette approche uniformisant, partielle et totalisante d'une société camerounaise en miettes.

Le peuplement de l'étendue camerounaise fut une longue suite de déplacements ponctués par des guerres, des arrangements, des emprunts et des métissages humains et culturels entre groupes. Le milieu naturel joua des rôles de refuge, de repoussoir ou de limite naturelle selon les techniques de survie maîtrisées. On doit sans doute nuancer ce propos qui fait des massifs montagneux, des forêts denses, des marais, des espaces refuges, des rivières ou des crêtes, des obstacles infranchissables. La répartition du peuplement ne s'est pas non plus calquée sur une appréciation favorable de la qualité ou des potentialités des lieux, mais sur des critères subjectifs de défiance ou de confiance entre peuples, groupes et clans. Ce n'est que depuis un siècle à peine que la carte du peuplement a été largement figée par la colonisation qui stabilisa les "villages", qui identifia et nomma des interlocuteurs légitimes ou illégitimes pour collecter l'impôt ou régler les conflits et qui traça les premières pistes pour relier les lieux entre eux. Ceci est bien connu. On oublie cependant de souligner la liaison obligée entre habitat permanent et cartographié. La carte topographique est faite de lignes et de points qui se traduisent de manière pérenne dans le paysage. On attribue bien des responsabilités à la colonisation qu'il convient de mesurer. Pour la colonisation, l'espace était ressource: force de travail et produits de collecte et de plantation. Pour exploiter la colonie au meilleur coût/avantage, il fallait assurer un minimum de paix et de stabilité en se mêlant le moins possible des affaires indigènes. Français comme Anglais pratiquèrent le gouvernement indirect théorisé par Lord Lugard chaque fois que possible et utilisèrent des supplétifs indigènes pour l'administration du territoire comme United Africa Company usait des rabatteurs locaux pour collecter café ou cacao. Le drainage des ressources vers la côte a conduit à mettre en place des axes de circulation sur des traces souvent précoloniaux et une infrastructure minimale de chantier qui se déplace suivant en cela les intérêts de l'exploitation. Au total, une mise en valeur minimaliste dessina des espaces utiles de petite dimension au sein de territoires laissés pour compte.

La vie de relations semble avoir été intense dans le sens Est-Ouest autant que dans le sens Nord-Sud à la faveur des échanges commerciaux

précoloniaux (kola par exemple). La polarisation côtière s'est réalisée à partir des axes fluviaux de communication dépendant des obstacles naturels et du maintien de la sécurité par des relais locaux. Elle a été accentuée par la ponction esclavagiste à partir de Calabar et la collecte des richesses naturelles (huile de palme, etc.) juste avant la conquête. Elle n'a jamais éliminée les autres axes de circulation qui ne seront que rarement modernisés comme la vole d'eau de la Bénoué ou les routes transversales utilisées par les éleveurs fulbé ou aku du Nigeria s'installant à partir des années vingt dans des zones à meilleure pluviométrie de la zone centrale camerounaise. Le tropisme Nord-Sud résulte d'une volonté de drainage vers la cote des ressources de l'arrière-cour camerounaise. Il s'est concrétisé par le chemin de fer qui s'est arrêté à Ngaoundéré et à Nkongsamba et le sera par le pipe-line Tchad-Kribi. La route de l'islam reste Est-Ouest et ce type d'échange retrouve une nouvelle jeunesse économique avec la montée en puissance du Nigeria des années pétrolières comme avec ses soubresauts actuels, ponctuées par des manipulations monétaires qui lui donnent une agressivité commerciale vis-à-vis du Cameroun.

L'intégration dans une main de fer

La décolonisation fut violente poussant le régime Ahidjo à congeler une mosaïque camerounaise qui lui apparaissait difficile à maintenir en l'état. Dans le même temps, se construisait un appareil d'Etat dans un esprit nationaliste alors que la scolarisation connaissait une ampleur sans précédent sur les deux rives du Mungo dans la partie méridionale. Le fédéralisme (1961-1972) a été une étape dans un projet unitaire participant du processus de désamorçage des tentations centrifuges gérées d'une main de fer. La participation calculée de toutes les élites au partage des rentes de l'Etat poursuivait cet objectif comme la récupération minutieuse des frustrés et des contestataires dans des organisations diverses mais unifiées. Les diplômés avalent aussi jusqu'à une période récente un emploi assuré dans l'appareil d'Etat. Et pour les populations septentrionales accusant un retard en matière d'éducation, des discriminations positives leur permettaient d'avoir leur contingent d'hommes à des postes de responsabilité. Ce grand nord regroupe en une seule province dont était originaire le président apparaissait comme le dépositaire de l'unité nationale.

Avec les Anglophones, la main de fer ne fut pas toujours dans un gant de

velours même si les gestes à leur endroit n'étaient pas négligeables: multiplication des rentes dans un Etat fédéré entretenant 12 000 "civil servants", maintien d'une structure parlementaire "à la britannique", quelque peu irréaliste avec chambre des chefs coutumiers et parlement de 80 membres. De multiples entreprises d'Etat comme agence de développement du Cameroun Occidental (WCDA), banque locale (Cameroon Bank), caisse de stabilisation (Marketing Board) ne furent pas des modèles de gestion! La mise en œuvre d'un "bilinguisme" visa l'intégration francophonique des élites Anglophones. L'expression de nuances ou de différences Anglophones dans diverses instances et dans la presse (Cameroon Times ou Outlook) fut étroitement limitée. L'économie fut au service d'une unité nationale construite sans précipitation. Si l'on parla beaucoup d'aménagement du territoire ou de planification régionale lors du troisième plan, force est de reconnaître que tout cela participa de la redistribution spatiale des services administratifs et sociaux. Et l'on usa de la création d'unités administratives pour satisfaire des barons locaux. La gestion des ressources fut parcimonieuse et le recours modéré à l'emprunt, ce qui évita au Cameroun le syndrome hollandais qu'a vécu le Nigeria. On ne chercha pas à désenclaver rapidement les grandes régions du pays. La construction de grandes routes notamment Yaoundé-Bafoussam ou Yaoundé-Douala et la mise sur pied d'une télévision nationale furent différés.

A la différence de la Côte-d'Ivoire, l'Etat ne sut pas créer une forte connivence avec une base de planteurs pour leur faire partager un ersatz de l'idéologie nationaliste des "clerks" et des élites urbaines. Les quelques tentatives récentes de "ruralisation" du régime Biya, issu pourtant du pays cacaoyer bété, ont fait long feu, tant la citadinité des gouvernants est frappante.

Entre débâcle et enlisement, une décongélation à hauts risques

Le prix économique d'une telle politique d'intégration fut une moindre croissance que la Côte d'Ivoire et un retard dans la modernisation du pays. L'injection de capitaux qui fit suite (1977-85) entraîna euphorie et endettement intérieur. C'est que le Cameroun n'a pas su tirer profit des ressources pétrolifères pour mettre en place un appareil économique non dépendant de cette manne. La chute des recettes d'exportation tant du cote agricole que pétrolier, à partir de 1986, sera le révélateur d'une situation

alarmante: investissements non rentables, créances douteuses, recettes fiscales en chute libre, faillite du système bancaire, évasion fiscale, contrebande, etc. Les politiques d'ajustement structurel qui servent depuis 1988 de politiques économiques ont été appliquées au Cameroun, avec retard et à reculons, si bien qu'elles ont eu d'importants effets négatifs sur l'Etat et la population sans produire des attendus positifs. Entre 1983 et 1993, le revenu réel par tête des ménages à Yaoundé aurait baissé de plus de 60% (6). Les premiers programmes d'ajustement (1988, 1991) n'ont pas été appliqués et le programme Ntangi (l'économiste Anglophone de la BIRD) de 1989 de liquidation, privatisation et redressement de près de 80 entreprises publiques s'est enlisé. La dévaluation n'a pas été le moteur de la relance attendue, faute de mesures d'accompagnement d'envergure: elle a été subie, pas utilisée. L'inflation a vite annulé les profits possibles de la manipulation monétaire, Les prix des vivres locaux ont augmenté substantiellement et l'on n'a pas su ou voulu écarter la spéculation sur des biens essentiels (huile ou médicaments). La remontée "miraculeuse" et de courte durée des prix internationaux des denrées agricoles de base a masqué le faible impact réel de la dévaluation. Et on peut estimer, à la différence de certains experts, que les conditions politiques comme monétaires et économiques de la relance selon le modèle néolibéral choisi sont loin d'être réunies en 1996. L'aggravation d'une pression fiscale tous azimuts alors que les recouvrements des recettes douanières restent toujours insuffisantes comme les comportements économiques des acteurs sur le terrain ne sont pas de nature à porter à l'optimisme. C'est que les marges de manœuvre économique comme politique restent très étroites si l'on exclut une nouvelle dévaluation "compétitive" ou un changement de pouvoir... Si les économistes orthodoxes attendent vainement le passage d'une économie administrée à une économie libéralisée, les autres sciences sociales voient se mettre en place une régulation par les réseaux clientélistes ou mafieux et le sacrifice inutile d'une génération de cadets sociaux. Enfin, la survie du régime est assurée en effet par le dehors qui pratique "un bouche à bouche" coûteux à l'efficacité douteuse.

La "stabilisation de la demande", la diminution de la masse salariale et l'ajustement monétaire ont touché à partir de 1989 de plein fouet cet embryon d'Etat-providence qu'était devenue la fonction publique camerounaise stoppant net l'émergence de classes moyennes et les paupérisant. Le Programme d'Ajustement Structurel a porté ainsi un coup au

principe de solidarité corporatiste qui soudait la fonction publique par-delà les différences socioculturelles entraînant une régression dans ce domaine vers des formes plus consanguines de solidarité-réciprocité (travaux de divers chercheurs d'OCISCA). L'entraide recherches a l'intérieur de groupes plus homogènes et plus restreints en période de crise ne peut être compris que comme un affaiblissement de l'idée nationale. Les personnes pourvues d'un diplôme se retrouvent aujourd'hui sans possibilité d'emploi étatique. Avec le multipartisme qui a éloigné du gâteau étatique de nombreux prétendants, elles grossissent le nombre des mécontents. Division des salaires par deux ou trois et irrégularité de leur paiement ont entraîné une "privatisation" de fait de l'Etat, tous les agents sollicitant de plus en plus leurs clients pour boucler leurs fins de mois. La cure d'amaigrissement de l'appareil d'Etat lui interdit de recruter et de saupoudrer l'espace étatique de multiples antennes administratives extérieures et de services sociaux en état de fonctionner. On a pu voir pourtant fleurir les universités à travers le pays sans que les moyens matériels puissent être vite mobilisés.

A partir de 1984, le consensus minimal nécessaire à l'affirmation de l'entité nationale s'est fissuré au plan politique. La partie septentrionale du pays travaillée par l'islam, minée par la montée des tensions internes, submergée par les produits nigériens, base arrière des seigneurs de guerre tchadiens et contrôlée autant par les "coupeurs de route" que par les forces de l'ordre entre dans une période de turbulence et de remodelage. L'empire fulbé renforcé par la colonisation et le régime Ahidjo semble touché sans faire place à une nouvelle donne. L'ouverture politique de la fin des années 80 a donné un élan considérable à la contestation Grassfields rampante jusque-là. Celle-ci s'appuie sur les résultats des entreprises de migrants qualifiés de "dynamiques", conduits par les Anglophones du Nord-Ouest qui furent les alliés de Yaoundé pour plaider la cause de l'unification contre les sudistes Mbile ou Endeley pro-nigériens. Plus entrepreneurs qu'entrepreneurs, mais présentant leurs succès économiques comme un gage de gestion exemplaire, accusant les groupes du Centre et du Sud de dilapider les richesses du pays, ils se posent en partenaires responsables du Fonds Monétaire International, de la Banque Mondiale et des Etats-Unis. S'engouffrant dans la revendication démocratique, cette demande d'alternance s'est trouvée confortée par une gestion répressive et maladroite de la situation économique comme politique. La peur de la "bamilekisation" des institutions comme l'église, entretenait jusque-là nombre de peurs, mais

les épreuves de force qui ont été le quotidien des premières années 90 ont rendu encore plus difficile le retour d'un équilibre permettant la poursuite de l'intégration nationale. C'est que les groupes du Centre et du Sud ont découvert leur proximité identitaire et tactique et recherche des alliances au Nord et dans le Littoral alors que les hommes du grand Ouest ont appris à leurs dépens que le pouvoir ne pouvait être conquis facilement ni par la rue, ni dans les urnes. La notion de "groupe bété" est ainsi apparue à la grande surprise de beaucoup. La machine économique s'est grippée et les adaptations se sont faites "par le bas" et par défaut: diminution des revenus, informatisation de l'emploi, multiplication des activités illégales, etc. L'appareil d'Etat fonctionne à minima. Et malgré le peu de respect des conditionnalités, le FMI, la Banque Mondiale et la France ont apporté leurs concours au pays et au régime pour éviter l'asphyxie. L'intégration nationale "à la camerounaise" ne dispose plus de carburant pour fonctionner depuis une décennie, ni des relais sociaux indispensables. L'insécurité physique et économique se nourrit maintenant de sa propre dynamique: transgression des règles, règlements et codes de conduite péniblement inculqués à la partie la plus modernisée de la société entière, repli de chacun sur ce qu'il considère comme son identité, sa sphère privative, acceptation de la délinquance et extension des zones sans droits, refus et peur de l'autre, etc.

Les Lieux de l'état et l'état Des Lieux

Dans une situation de survie, le régime est obligé de passer des compromis. Dans le jeu géopolitique à trois grandes composantes de plus en plus hétéroclites dans lequel il est enfermé depuis l'indépendance, il ne peut se mettre ados les "nordistes" et les "anglo-Bami" si bien que son rétablissement récent ne pouvait que se faire avec l'appui d'anciens alliés au nord. Cette situation trouve sa traduction sur l'image réelle du territoire. Plus qu'un ménage à trois, le Cameroun verse dans un échangisme aux figures plutôt surgies d'un tableau de Bosch. Le "résumé de l'Afrique" des géographes devient un palimpseste difficilement lisible. Et que reste-t-il de cette belle architecture urbaine stricte calquée sur le système administratif?

Les archipels camerounais

Du point de vue de l'intégration nationale, le Cameroun n'est pas le

triangle classique exclusivement orienté Nord-Sud qui vient immédiatement à l'esprit au vu de sa forme topographique. Si l'on cherche à dessiner une figure montrant le poids de la population résidente, on est amené à hypertrophier les provinces de l'Ouest et du Nord-Ouest et celle de l'Extrême-Nord alors que l'Adamaoua, l'Est et le Sud-Ouest se réduisent à des corridors ou à des marches périphériques. Le Littoral est presque complètement absorbé par la ville de Douala. Dans ce schéma, la place des deux grandes villes, Yaoundé et Douala, est surlignée. Si l'on ajoute à cette première image approximative, les lignes de conflits, les zones peu contrôlées, les *no man's land* servant de césure et les véritables axes de communication (routes fortement utilisées), on se trouve en présence d'archipels ou d'îlots séparés par des espaces dévitalisés, mais occupés. Parmi ces espaces, certaines terres sur-occupées au relief heurté ont été des refuges (Mandara par exemple) pour une multiplicité de populations ayant longtemps refusé la conquête fulbé. D'autres sont des terres faiblement contrôlées par des populations autochtones, qui leur sont disputées par des migrants (Moungo, Meme). Ailleurs, l'espace est compartimenté et aliéné comme dans la région du mont Cameroun qui voit les *kpe* "parques" dans leurs réserves envahies souvent par des immigrants alors que 90% des terres sont appropriées par les complexes agro-industriels. En d'autres lieux, le parcours se substitue à l'exploitation: espaces de parcours des éleveurs dans l'Adamaoua, le Middle Belt camerounais qui ne connaît pas de frontière, espaces contrebandiers du Rio-del-Rey, de la province du Nord ou de l'Est, étendues laissées aux gens d'armes et autres coupeurs de routes dans le Cameroun septentrional.

Les "bandeirantes" camerounais ont créé des fronts pionniers sous la protection et l'encadrement étroit de l'Etat au pied des massifs des monts Mandara, dans le Nkam (opération Yabassi-Bafang), dans la vallée de la Bénoué. Ils se sont installés aussi par glissements au-delà de la Sanaga, dans la vallée du Noun ou de la Meme, créant des tensions qui se sont parfois concrétisées quand ces secteurs étalent parties intégrantes d'un groupe structure comme le sultanat Bamoum pour la plaine du Noun. Kirdi, Igbo, Bamenda ou Bamiléké se sont enfin installés le long des routes de la migration et de l'exil loin de leurs terres d'origine, dans le Nord, l'Est et le Sud-Ouest. Expulsions et xénophobie remodelent avec la crise ces espaces de promiscuité ethnique dans les quartiers des grandes villes, mais aussi dans les fronts pionniers et les routes de colonisation. Ces espaces sont devenus

sensibles, parfois entourés de sortes de cordons sanitaires. S'il n'y a pas encore de ghettos, certains processus pourraient y conduire.

L'image que l'on peut construire à partir de ces constats qui pourraient être renseignés par les résultats des choix politiques des habitants sur longue période (vote Mbida en pays bété en 1958, Anglophones ayant voté pour le rattachement au Nigeria dans la Ndian et la Donga et Mantung en 1961, vote kirdi dans le Cameroun septentrional en 1992, etc.) montre l'existence d'archipels reliés par des isthmes et de minces corridors de circulation séparés par des angles morts ou des espaces-tampons. On peut rapidement distinguer quatre archipels organisés différemment:

1) la partie centrale du Cameroun septentrional animée par Garoua et Maroua, peuple de kirdi, dominée par les Fulbé minoritaires, envahie par les produits matériels et religieux du Nigeria et cernée par quelques grands lamidats comme celui de Rey Bouda à l'est;

2) la partie centrale du Cameroun méridional dans un rayon de 200 km autour de Yaoundé, pays ewondo et éton, organisés autour de la capitale administrative;

3) les départements centraux de l'Ouest et du Nord-Ouest se projetant dans les villes de Bamenda et Bafoussam (Mifi, Menoua, Mezam, Bui), terres des grandes chefferies Grassfields, flanquée de marches frontalières au nord (Menchum, vannée de la Donga) et à l'ouest (Manyu), du sultanat bamoum rival et d'espaces de circulation et de colonisation au sud (Moungo, Wouri, Meme, Fako et Naïan);

4) Douala est à elle seule une ville-archipel: forte de sa composition ethnique (70% de Bamiléké), elle est le lieu de confrontations du capitalisme international et du "dynamisme" Bamiléké; entourée de complexes agro-industriels et de péchés nigériens, elle structure la région de réseaux commerciaux étendus jusqu'au Nigeria, Tchad, Centrafrique et Guinée Equatoriale, mais elle souffre de sa position subordonnée vis-à-vis de Yaoundé qu'elle ne cesse de contester.

De vastes espaces semblent vides ou peu occupés entre ces archipels. Terres parcourues et appropriées, elles ne sont pas vacantes. Toute nouvelle occupation génère palabre, demande de réparation et conflit.

Paradoxalement, le pays est déjà vieux avant accouchement de la nation parce qu'il ne sait pas transcender conflits et inégalités dans une idéologie englobant qui donnerait espoir et esprit de conquête. Les différends s'enlisent et "l'on tire sur tout ce qui bouge". La notion de dynamisme peut paraître dérisoire dans ce contexte où la société et non l'Etat rend circonspect l'individu voulant agir.

L'impuissance des lieux a vocation centrale

Où se trouvent les lieux de commandement et d'intégration de ce puzzle fait de pièces mal assemblées et qui leur donneraient un minimum de cohérence? Doit-on créditer l'ordre administratif des cites de cette centralité qui ne se fonde trop souvent que sur l'exercice de prérogatives définies par l'Etat et la loi et alors même que seuls quelques quartiers sont contrôlés à certaines heures de la journée? Les villes camerounaises participent du rassemblement de populations hétérogènes qui vivent cote à cote sans se rencontrer ou dialoguer. Les centres urbains peuvent être le creuset du projet national, s'ils participent à son élaboration et parviennent à en assurer la diffusion. Etatique le cas avant la crise et qu'en est-il aujourd'hui? A notre sens et sous réserve d'études plus approfondies, la réponse est négative pour les centres secondaires souvent très homogènes comme Dschang. Et si l'on s'éloigne des lieux de travail de la bureaucratie étatique, on trouve peu d'endroits où s'esquisse l'intégration dans les grandes villes, mis à part écoles, églises ou stades. Encore faut-il constater que chacun ici reste à sa place, n'écoute que les discours des siens et à ses écoles comme les Anglophones à Yaoundé ou les Francophones dans le Sud-Ouest. Avec la crise, la partition urbaine s'accroît naturellement. Et les formes de contestation/répression utilisées ont contribué à l'enfermement de chaque groupe dans sa concession ou son quartier avec des gardiens à l'entrée comme c'est la règle à Kumba, ville moyenne de la zone Anglophone, depuis quatre ans dont certains quartiers se surnomment Beyrouth. La socialisation des citoyens, et notamment celle des jeunes, est en panne. Les villes camerounaises, même les plus grandes ne se posent, ni en véritables villes dans leur paysage ou leur bâti, ni en lieux de création d'une citoyenneté camerounaise qui serait synonyme de citoyenneté sociologique. Les rares études sur ces questions confirment ces hypothèses. Et les crises actuelles tant économiques que politiques renforcent cet état de fait.

L'avenir entre parenthèses

On peut toujours penser tirer des leçons du passé pour imaginer l'avenir. On peut s'interroger sur le présent pour penser que le pire n'est pas certain. Les éléments dont on dispose cependant ne permettent d'évoquer ce futur qu'entre parenthèses. La simple stabilisation de l'espace selon les modalités actuelles supposerait la redistribution élargie d'un gâteau national toujours plus rétréci. Difficile. Le dépassement des tensions et frustrations constitutives de l'espace étatique camerounais à petite et moyenne échelle passe par un projet hégémonique porteur de sens pour la génération qui n'a pas accès au pouvoir. On n'en voit pas les prémisses. Les tentations centrifuges s'affichent du côté des connivences islamiques, Anglophones ou Fang-Béti. Elles font partie, pour l'heure, de stratégies de négociation agitées sous forme de menaces plus que de réelles options. C'est que la vie "à côté" n'a rien d'enviable, ni au Nigeria, ni au Gabon.

Le Cameroun finalement n'existe qu'à travers un Etat arbitre, régulateur et animateur. Et la redéfinition de ces fonctions et de leur exercice s'impose pour baliser un "itinéraire futur acceptable pour tous qui ne doit pas exclure des modalités renouvelées de régulation économique, sociale et politique. Tout ceci oblige à une réflexion sur les présupposés libéraux actuels en relation avec la norme démocratique. Attendre tout d'une hypothétique "société civile" semble prématuré même si des dynamiques sociales se font jour en dehors d'une reconfiguration en réseau des anciens et nouveaux rentiers. À défaut de pouvoir annoncer ce véritable ajustement, on peut noter qu'il n'a rien à voir avec la potion amère des bailleurs de fonds et des experts qui les entourent.

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The Government's Social Policy And National Integration

Aloysius Ajab Amin

In Cameroon, the 1960s through to the mid 1980s were periods of rapid economic growth supported by high agriculture and petroleum production. The gross domestic product grew at an average rate of 8.5 %; this was far above the population growth rate of below 3%. The good economic performance provided the government with a good source of government revenues and opportunity to carry out worthwhile expenditures especially on public goods and those that generate positive externalities and create cohesive effects such as education and health. However, it seems that the government did not use these opportunities to properly develop its social sector for regional balance and national integration.

Declining Economy

Since the late 80s, the main economic indicators have worsened; consequently, the standard of living of the average Cameroonian had been falling. This is therefore bound to increase the level of poverty, inequality and consequently, an increased number of the poor with increased tension between and among the regional and national groups. As it stand prior to the 80s, high economic growth did not help in eradicating poverty nor giving any preferable and equitable income distribution which have positive impact on the social sector such as education and health. Since 1986 the economy has declined, due to both external and internal factors. The external factors were the drop in the export prices, decline in petroleum production and consequently fall in the government's revenue and increase in public debt, both domestic and external debts. The internal factors were mainly structural which were complicated by management problems.

The demand for labour has also fallen, thereby limiting employment and income possibilities. The 1993 civil servants' salary cuts and 1994 CFA devaluation went to worsen the situation as this has been followed by continuous budgetary cuts that have severely affected the social sector. All this has tended to increase the level of poverty, regional imbalance and

consequently, regional and ethnic tensions. The formal sector has contracted as the informal sector expands. For example, in 1983, 65% of the total workers were salaried workers. This fell to 63% in 1987 and to below 50% in 1993 (World Bank 1995). With the worsening of the economic situation, the informal sector has become the main provider of jobs; since 1992 out of every five new jobs created, four are in the informal sector (DIAI 1993). These jobs have provided and are still providing, very low rewards despite the long working hours. The fiscal cuts have affected the social sector, much to the detriment of the poor. Much of the cuts have been made in materials, supplies, and in development projects of the social sector. The public facilities are becoming very poor. In fact, the education and health facilities are not only needing maintenance and development, they are deteriorating. The type of strong highly centralized government institutions is partly reflected in marked regional differences in the allocation of resources which have strongly disfavoured the social sector as well as the rural areas.

Diversity and the Government's Role

Cameroon's regional, linguistic, ecologic and ethnic diversity are as striking as its potentials in natural and human endowments. These should have constructively and strategically been used as building blocks of a strong nation since they are the main input or resources into national building. Yet they could be poorly managed, thus generating tensions and explosive situations among the regional ethnic groups. The exploitation of the endowments for the benefit of all citizens and regions is the function of public policy and the managers of public resources.

While one can reaffirm that state goals include ensuring the material well-being of its citizens, meeting the basic human needs of all regions and sectors of the country, it must be stated that these goals may be contrary to the effective accommodation of the regional and ethnic diversity. However stressing on regional balance does not override other policy objectives. The competence of the state is therefore reflected in the collective management of the national economy as well as accommodating regional and ethnic differences. Although in many countries, it can be assumed that policies on regional differences or ethnic diversity are discussed and formulated in open political competition where policy outcomes are the product of political framework. Even in situations where the State takes into consideration its

citizens' opinions in policy formulation and implementation, the leadership's initiative is highly crucial in these spheres. The state incidentally is the arbiter as well as the power broker, with distribution of power and resources within the State's structure and the economy reflecting the political dominant groups (Bangura, 1994). This partly explains why there is usually a great gap between the patterns of spending in the public sector and the country's development needs. Yet, this gap can be reduced depending on the political will and commitment to reduce regional imbalances and create an integrated cohesive nation. The government has had as its responsibility the provision of social services which have short and long term consequences or effects. We limit ourselves to education and health as the key sectors in the national integration or economy.

Health

The achievement in the health sector is usually reflected in some key health variables such as life expectancy at birth, infant mortality and crude death rate. Since the 70s, there has been a significant improvement in these indicators. Life expectancy' has risen from 47 years in 1975 to 56 in 1992 from when there has been a tendency for it to remain stable. Infant mortality has fallen from 110 in 1975 to 60 per 1000 births in 1992. Life expectancy varies from region to region the South, East and South West provinces are the 'province with the lowest life expectancy and the highest mortality rate. This is followed by the Far-North, North, Adamaoua and West provinces. The Centre and Littoral provinces have the highest life expectancy, with the lowest mortality rate (PNUD 1993). It must be noted that within provinces or regions there are differences, with the rural zones having the lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality rate. The rural areas are also dominantly poor. Cameroon's public health care is provided by a delivery system that ranges from rural health centres to urban modern hospitals. Some of the hospitals are highly specialized and well equipped. In general the hospitals take more than their proportionate share of the health sector's budget; since the government has shown a bias towards hospital-based health care. Although the number of persons per doctor (12,600) or more (2,064) is still very high showing an inadequate number of medical personnel, the health personnel is concentrated in hospitals serving the urban and semi-urban areas. The rural area as well as some provinces are poorly covered, for

example, in the Far-North province there are more than 100,000 persons per hospital while there are 30,000 persons per hospital in the South province (PNUD 1993). These numbers are bound to increase as the rate of investment in health infrastructure has sharply slowed down, while the population continues to increase. But on the whole, the hospital-based curative care system takes a very large share of health expenditure in Cameroon similar to many African countries. In Cameroon's 1986/87 budget, more than 80% of the health care budget went to hospital consumption. In the 1987/88, budget the situation was more glaring with 90% of health investment budget going to the construction of the major hospitals particularly in the two major towns of Yaounde and Douala (Amin 1994). Many African countries seem to follow a similar pattern: Kenya between 1985 and 1991 allocated over 70% of its health expenditure to curative care. Malawi allocated 82% between 1981 and 1988. Uganda spent over 50% of its budget on ten major killer diseases (World Bank 1994). Furthermore hospital-based care involves much drugs and medical supplies. After personnel costs pharmaceuticals are the largest component above 30% of the recurrent cost in Cameroon health care (World Bank 1994). The state used to bear much of the cost of drugs but recently the cost of drugs (which has greatly increased) has been passed on the patients. Households have been forced to cut down their medical expenditure, or find alternative health care. Almost all drugs are imported, and with the 1994 devaluation the price of imported drugs have almost doubled. The sharp price increase coupled with the drop in per capita income or household income has had far-reaching consequences which have also tended to intensify regional differences. On the whole, a greater part of the public spending would have been saved if emphasis were on other types of care particularly on preventive and primary care; these types of care seem to cover greater areas.

Education

Education too has some good public aspects with enormous externalities. Education poses cultural policy choices which give opportunities that are closely linked to life chances for national integration and regional balance. We therefore stress on the importance of education as a catalyst for regional balance and national integration. In fact there is a general agreement on the externalities generated by the first echelon of education i.e. primary

education. The rates of return of education at the different education levels have been estimated with the primary level shown to yield the highest social rate of return. Yet in general, the education expenditures favour the secondary and tertiary educational levels which are mainly located in the urban centres. There are very few primary schools in the rural areas where the majority of the people live (PNUD, 1991) and very little resources are allocated to primary education sector which provides the basics for equipping the children to develop their potential and participate fully in the society. Nationally, primary school enrolment has had a marked yearly increase since the 70s. However, since the 1991/92 academic year, the enrolment rate started declining; the national gross primary school enrolment rate has risen from 60% in 1970 to 80% in 1988 and in 1994, it was as low as 67%. Adamaoua, North, and Far-North provinces have so far enrolment rates of less than 50%, while the southern provinces have much higher enrolment rate. The Centre, littoral, and West provinces have the highest enrolment rate as compared to the other provinces. Generally, the male enrolment rate is significantly higher than that of the female (PNUD, 1993). These differences exist among the provinces as well as between rural and urban areas, The female enrolment rate in the North provinces is as low as 27,3% in the Far-North as compared to 99% in Centre and West provinces, while the national average is 73,3% (PNUD, 1991). On the whole, the enrolment rate has been decreasing, since 1988 when the economic crisis started having negative effects on the average citizen.

Public Goods and Political Changes

All governments supply their citizens with some form of public goods and services. What is also relevant and important is the quality of such public goods and how they contribute to development and accommodating or balancing regional and ethnic diversities or differences. Hence the provision of these goods may neither favour all nor be of good quality. It has become evident that for sustained economic growth and development, good macroeconomic management and good governance are absolutely necessary. Cameroon's colonial history provided a background for a federal structure which was short-lived, giving way to a highly centralized one-party state. The rapidly growing economy helped to constrain the fragmentation of the society where firmly entrenching the power structure.

Since 1986, tension and fragmentation along linguistic, regional ethnic and even economic lines have increased with deeper economic crisis. Rising discontent is accommodated with the institution of political pluralism. Yet the legalizing of an increasing number of political parties has not affected the privileged and power structures since no articulate policies have been formulated since the 60s to the present. The type of policies adopted so far have tended to create and generate greater inter and intra regional inequalities. As the different ethnic groups' representatives have not been able to translate their representation into providing the basic education and health needs of the respective regions. The economic and political changes have only exposed the existing latent problems. These changes have meant the diminishing financial role of the state government, while increasing the unmet needs of the regions and ethnic groups. This has therefore intensified the ethnic problem and highlighted regional imbalance.

In fact regional and ethnic tensions have existed since the 70s, though were latent. But the declining economic situation has exposed and heightened these tensions. And the state's inability to meet the regional needs tends to heighten the ethnic tension. Yet proper management of the existing resources could lessen the growing tension, and bring about a well balanced development and integrated Nation.

Conclusion

So far the government has been slow in developing the capacity and political will to tackle the problems generated from neglect of regional and ethnic imbalances. There has been missed opportunities in terms of not using the huge windfall from exports in the 70s through mid 80s, to build up necessary social capital particularly in health and education which could promote regional balance and strong national integration. Now these regional or ethnic issues must be recognized and tackled particularly in terms of social expenditures or else the social tension could build up and explode. Expenditures on the social sector (education and health) have not stricken regional balance, and intra sectoral expenditures have been neglected. Yet expenditure on the primary subsectors of the social sector is the vital instrument for regional balance and integration. Regions do generally evaluate their perceived well-being in comparison with others, such that regional tension could develop if some regions are made to feel that they are

less favoured.

To forestall such tension, it becomes necessary to reallocate resources in favour of the primary sector. This type of reallocation could be inter and intra-sectoral allocation with strong emphasis on investment rather than recurrent expenditures.

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Contested Meanings: Rulers, Subjects and National Integration in Post-Colonial Cameroon

Nantang Jua

An emphasis on colonial difference, a tool for self-defence, between the colonial rulers and the colonized people was a marked characteristic in the struggle for independence in Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon. Independence gave rise to juridical statehood and the task of constructing an empirical state²⁹ devolved on the leadership of the post-colonial state. The challenge of national integration constituted a principal obstacle in the realization of the latter, an obstacle that the imbrication of the state on nation only covered over. Overcoming this problem called for creative strategies as not even the European state that served as the “modular state” for Africa³⁰ had faced this challenge as nationalism preceded the birth of the state, if not was its coeval. To this end, the leaders of the post-colonial state devised several strategies, amongst them the control of the reinscription of practices, and by that very fact their recontextualization, from the colonial state in the post-colonial state. It is argued in this paper that the efficacy of using these past signifying traces was hampered by the lack of consensus over their meanings.

Yet, a consensus on these past signifying traces was important for African nationalism could not be grounded on soil and language as Fichte had observed in the case of Germany. In Africa, the soil had been reduced to only a means of production and could not therefore serve as a vehicle for national integration as means of production do not articulate identities³¹. Neither could the official languages for whereas these languages claimed the European, the African could

²⁹Robert H. Jackson & Carl G. Rosberg (1986), “Sovereignty and Underdevelopment: Juridical Statehood in the African Crisis” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.24, No.1, passim.

³⁰cf. Partha Chatterjee (1993), *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chatterjee argues that an acceptance of the modular state that had been imagined by Europeans and Americans, meant that the new states adopting this model had nothing to imagine again. They were basically consumers. p.5

³¹Simon During, “Postmodernism and Post-colonialism Today” in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (eds) (1995), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, p. 126

only lay claim to them and they therefore remained languages of exclusion rather than inclusion³² to the extent that all Africans were not exposed to them. As such the official languages were merely instruments of power and opportunity³³ for the members of the hegemonic class. On the one hand, they enabled only members of this class to imagine a community. This has been referred to as *nationisme*, the agenda of ultra-minor elite to rapidly fabricate a nation.³⁴ On the other, those that had been excluded from this “Russification” suffered from a motivational deficit vis-a-vis their ability to imagine this nation. It is with a view to overcoming this problem that the post-colonial leadership has sought to benefit from the energizing and creative possibilities of past signifying practices, especially those that have been reinscribed in the post-colonial state. It is the “creative ingenuity” that makes the post-colonial state that is distinct from its historical precursor or the colonial state.

Though distinct from its historical precursor, it is not different from it as both of them “invented communities”. Refusing the conservative faith in nature and essence, they are contested systems of representation enacted through social institutions, and legitimizing or limiting people’s access to the rights and resources of the nation-state³⁵. Pointedly, I would argue, it leads to the double exclusion of the woman. Already refused agency (except on an episodic basis) in the pre-colonial state, attempts to disarticulate her are also common in the post-colonial state. To what extent is Cameroonian nationalism/nation-building “like our relationship to women: too implicated in our moral nature to be changed honourably and too accidental to be worth changing”³⁶?

³²Benedict Anderson(1990), *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, p.122

³³Braj B. Kachru, “The Alchemy of English” in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin(1995), *The Post-colonial Reader*, London: Routledge, p.292

³⁴.Michel Cahen (1999) “L’Etat ne crée pas la nation: La nationalisation du monde”, *Autrepart* 10’, especially pp.153-155.

³⁵ Anne McClintock “No longer In a Future Heaven”: Women and Nationalism in South Africa” *Transition Position*, p.105.

³⁶ George Santayana in Anne McClintock, “No longer In a Futuer Heaven”, p.105.

Meaning, it has been observed, is a social fact that arises within discourse of a particular culture. Therefore, it has to be intersubjectively validated. Its validation of practices from the past enables them to be used for purposes of national integration that Jean-Francois Bayart refers to as the “hegemonic project”³⁷. Bayart construes this as a societal project. To the extent that this suggests inclusiveness, it must incorporate alternative or oppositional discourses³⁸. Failing this, it should be seen as a class project that would not necessarily help improve the symbolic efficiency of the state. It is posited herein that the emergence of contested meanings over practices such as, unquestioned deference to traditional authority (rulers), indicates that the hegemonic class cannot readily recover the gains that it seeks by reinscribing them in the post-colonial state. Furthermore contested meanings is evidence that the cultural /structural violence that the hegemonic class sought to impose on the consciousness of the subject through its control of the individual as a “social minor” and thereby his disarticulation and devalorization has been stopped hot on the tracks.

Enhancing the Symbolic Efficiency of the Post-Colonial State

The colonial state in Cameroon was just a hiatus between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial state and did not thaw the “fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient venerable prejudices” from the pre-colonial era. Consequently, the Cameroonian post-colonial state like all its African counterparts was/is simultaneously similar but also organically different from the colonial state. This doubleness (has) contributed to its fecundity. Thus, for example, in the wake of independence, the ruling class adopted a modernizing discourse that was predicated on the secular discourse of reason positing a morality purportedly critical of the “pathological” (in the Kantian sense) and stressing a new conception of individual rights. After all, the new Cameroonian elite had been assigned a specific mission -to serve as the ears and eyes of the traditional elite- when it was sent to European schools to acquire cultural capital. Given this, its commitment to the modernizing discourse was genuine

³⁷Jean-Francois Bayart (1979), *L'Etat au Cameroun*, Paris: les Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, p.238

³⁸Raymond Williams (1990), *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.

and not just meant to satisfy the demands of the metropolitan powers. At the same time, it had to stress the communitarian spirit that had been the organizational principle in the pre-colonial state. In effect, national integration in post-colonial Cameroon entailed overcoming the twin challenges of modernization and political Africanization.

Early into independence, the ruling elite sought to satisfy these twin demands faced by resorting to straddling. Inasmuch as modernization was considered a moral imperative, it could not be to the total detriment of tradition or the indigenous culture. Consequently, realizing that only tradition could provide the moral and philosophical basis for the new nation-state, a realization that had forced the metropolitan powers to adopt the principle of indirect rule, tradition had to be modernized. However, it had to be cautious in harnessing tradition for developmental purposes that it not be construed as a challenge to the old leadership. Initial efforts in this direction took the form of the rulers of the post-colonial state simply adopting the definition of “self” that was prescribed in the pre-colonial state. Thus, they retained their communal other-regarding value frame as well as the individual self-regarding one that is intrinsic to (Western) modernization. They thereby helped to endorse prevailing power structures by reproducing beliefs that provided the social and political frames of intelligibility and allegiances necessary for their uncontested functioning.

This construction of social “self” in communal terms led to a continuous reproduction of ties, especially between the rural and urban areas. Due to this linkage, people in the rural areas tended to identify the success of one of their ethnic “same” in towns as their own validation. The ripples were enormous for nation-state construction insofar as the elites were seen as the reification of the state. For example, the appointment of their “same” as Minister was seen as constituting an honour for the whole group. The Minister was seen as their double and was expected to pluralize his identity as is demonstrated by the oft repeated remarks at the home coming of the new Minister that “the government has finally remembered us”. Though the initial support to and identification with the Minister was predicated on affective considerations, it could not be sustained for long on a mere symbolic basis. In order to retain the loyalty of his people, the Minister had to make sure that resources flowed to his region. Only this could guarantee the participation of more people in the monetary economy in a context where exchange rather than use value was becoming the norm – thus instrumentalization.

As the efficacy of simply pluralizing identities waned, members of the

hegemonic class embarked on a new offensive as they sought to penetrate symbolic networks that still maintained their performative powers. To this end, accumulation of titles became commonplace with a view to enabling their makeover and therefore straddle both traditional and modern spaces.

Cumulation reinforced the hybridity of the new leadership and was supposed to help shore up the symbolic efficiency of the regime as it rewrote the past, “including past signifying traces in new contexts which retroactively change (d) their meaning³⁹”. The Biya regime accentuated and systematized this practice started under the Ahidjo regime. To be invested with traditional powers, the modern elite had to undergo the initiation rites (a practice that is instrumental in the social construction of adulthood) that contribute to the discursive economies that enhance the prevailing institutions in the rural areas. Proper initiation rites consist of the purification phase involving the ritual inversion of normal social practices, “a form of symbolic behaviour that detaches the initiate from his former life, the liminal phase in which people from diverse backgrounds undergo homogenization and the ritual incorporation and aggregation phase that consecrates social regulations as an aspect of the self-disciplining of the normalized subject. Together, these contribute to making power more productive, effective and humane⁴⁰. Revealingly, the “utilitarian initiates” from the government were not subjected to the rigors of the process and all that they sought were the rights (an increase in their symbolic value) that come with the offices rather than the obligations.

Biya was crowned in the North-West as “fon of fons”. In Douala, he was initiated into the “ngondo”, a cultural group that mediates relations of the Doualas with their gods. Given the contrived nature of these events, I am sceptical that they can be seen as conferring the blessings of the ancestors on Biya as postulated by Bayart⁴¹. Albeit this, the regime placed a high premium on the symbolic value of these events, had the capital to buy titles and was

³⁹Slavoz Zizek (1994), *For they not what they do*, London: Verso p.202.

⁴⁰Patrick Harries (1994) *Work, Culture and Identity*, Johannesburg:

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⁴¹Jean-Francois Bayart (1989), *L'Etat en Afrique: La politique du ventre*, Paris: Fayard, p.219.

interested more in the form than in the meaning of the rites. Consequently, one can see this as an instantiation of a logic of increasing convertibility of capital(ism). And the traditional normative structure or habitus has failed to prevent this convertibility⁴². Performed in the glare of television that produces narrated reality, these initiation rites have been divested of their sacred value. Ample publicity given to these occasions shows that the ruling elite believes that the ordinary man subscribes to the “logic of fetishtic inversion” in interpersonal relationships where subjects are prone to treat people who hold power as if they already possess that power a priori, whereas in reality they are invested with power only because they are treated as such.⁴³ Because of this conviction, all of Biya’s ministers to seek and are conferred traditional titles⁴⁴. However, the straddling of two historicities in post-colonial Cameroon (the pre-colonial emotivism and the colonial logocentrism) gives rise to situational indeterminacy and the power that political consumers accord an authority is in a constant state of flux. Thus, power relationships have to be assessed situationally. Whereas relations of dominance and inequality can be recovered out of the seemingly innocent practice of the rites of passage, I doubt that the heavy investments of ruling class in this project would yield the expected political returns.

Also with a view to borrowing legitimacy from the traditional authorities, the post-colonial state enacted Decree No. 77/245 of 15 July 1977. Per Article 20 of the decree, chiefs were recognized as auxiliaries of the administration. In this role they had to serve as intermediaries between the administration and the people, help the administrative authorities in the execution of government directives and recover taxes within their domains. Given the desire of the state to disable dialogic reciprocity, it is not surprising that the chiefs so recognized were not given a role in the feed-back loop of the decision-making process. In

⁴²cf. the case of Algeria where the opposite practice occurs, Pierre Bourdieu(1977), *Outline of A Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴³Slavoj Zizek (1993) *Looking Awry*, Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, p.36.

⁴⁴cf. Michael Rowlands (1993), “Accumulation and the Cultural Politics of Identity in the Grassfields” in *Itinéraires d’Accumulation au Cameroun*, eds., Peter Geschiere & Piet Konings, Leiden & Paris: ASC & Karthala, p.95. Rowlands argument that these initiations are meant to capture these new elites in traditional networks overlooks the designs of the latter to appropriate this practice.

as much as this may have been a conscious decision to prevent the system from being overloaded with demands, it was also indicative of its determination to control collective will formation from above.

Evidence that the state really sought not only to capture but also undermine the institution of Chief can be seen in the way in which it has been manipulated. Article 2 of the 1977 decree sets out a threefold classification of chiefs: First degree chiefs were to be those with two second degree chiefs under their jurisdiction and within the territorial limits of a divisional unit. Second degree chiefs had to have the allegiance of two Third degree chiefs and their jurisdiction could be no larger than a sub-division. The jurisdiction of Third Degree Chiefs was limited to a “village” or a quarter in the rural or urban area. However, intent on manipulating these chiefs, Article 4 gave discretionary powers to the administrative powers to classify a chieftom as first, second or third degree on the basis of the nebulous concepts of demographic or economic importance.

The sanctions contained in Article 29 guaranteed that the chiefs would comply with the directives of the Administration. A threat to suspend the payments provided for in Article 22 was enough to bring the chiefs into line. Pauperization that it could engender was a harrowing outcome. Its effects were already palpable in the cases of some chiefs who had been deprived of this revenue because of the inability of the cash strapped state to pay its functionaries on a regular basis⁴⁵. In exchange for anticipated cooperation, sinecures or appointments to prebends were sometimes given. Cases in point include the appointments of the Fons of Bali and Bafut as members of the Management Board of the North-West Development Authority (MIDENO).

As the state seeks to manipulate traditional authority so as to convert chiefs into clients, relations between the two (state and chiefs) have taken on the semblance of parasitism rather than symbiosis. State leverage over the chiefs is increased by the fact that chiefs, as do others, have financial needs. But the state’s contempt for chiefs is glaringly obvious from the shabby treatment given them by the administrative officers. In Bui, for example, a Prefectorial order was signed forbidding the Fon of Nso from leaving his palace following his support for his subjects in their refusal to pay water bills to a parastatal that had taken over their supply system. Thus, Fons who play their “divine” role by

⁴⁵Interview by the Fon of Banjoun in *Challenge Hebdo*, No.7, 26 August 1992, p.12.

serving as guardians of their subjects can be sanctioned, especially in instances where this protection conflicts with the interests of the post-colonial state.

On the whole therefore, relations between the chiefs and the state seem to be characterized by the law of hate syndrome where the latter hate the former but is condemned to deal with them for expediency purposes. Determined to deal a severe blow to the surplus trust that the chiefs benefit from, President Paul Biya proposed in his “projet de societe” that for the purpose of promoting participatory democracy, the posts of chiefs should be elective rather than hereditary⁴⁶. This practice common to the acephalous societies in southern Cameroon has enabled the state to successfully capture them and their powers ultimately inhere from their recognition by the state rather than from the surplus of trust that their subjects accord them. Seen against this background, an overriding concern with the construction of a strong post-colonial state may be the reason for this ostensibly altruistic position. In as much as some would celebrate this proposal in the parts of the country where this practice has a cultural resonance, its implementation would be problematic especially in the West and North-West Provinces where chiefs have a different “meaning” or the cultural construction of the chief’s legitimacy has another basis.

Scepticism, vis-a-vis this proposal is heightened because Biya argued against the participation of chiefs in national politics under the monolithic party. However, pluralism prompted by the demand for liberal or at least “Jacobin” democracy, led him to backtrack from this position. For example, the Fon of Mankon was co-opted as the first Vice-President of Biya’s party, the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM). At the same time, the Fons of Bali and Bafut became alternate members of that party’s Central Committee. Fon Robert Tatang of Batcham, a member of the opposition party, the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP), was permitted to become a Member of Parliament in the March 1992. This Fon gained notoriety shortly thereafter by crossing into the ranks of the CPDM. All this may signal realignment in Cameroonian politics. In the struggle that pitches the state against civil society, some chiefs have now switched sides in favour of the former.

It is even postulated that the Biya regime sponsored the formation of a breakaway faction of the North-West Chief’s Conference. Purportedly, it was

⁴⁶Paul Biya (1987), *Communal Liberalism*, London: Macmillan Publishers, p.51

motivated by concerns that the so-called authentic faction that was still in gestation promised to be too independent on crucial issues such as the Anglophone clamour for separation from la Republique du Cameroun. According to *The Herald*, the Governor of the North-West Province reportedly urged the chiefs of the breakaway faction at their inaugural meeting not to adhere to the call of the Southern Cameroons National Council(SCNC) for the sovereignty of the Anglophone region because “Cameroon is one and indivisible”⁴⁷. Similarly, the Governor of the South-West Province convinced a few South-West Chiefs to issue a communiqué on the eve of the meeting of their Association condemning the Anglophone call for separation⁴⁸. Rejection of the SCNC position by these chiefs is perceived and presented by the government as a renunciation of the Buea Declaration and the Bamenda Proclamation adopted in the wake of All Anglophone Conferences in these cities respectively. So much value is put on these renunciations because the surplus morality attributed to the chiefs by their subjects supposedly enables an uncritical acceptance of their position on issues, i.e., the religiously interpellated subject who is “silenced”. After all, anthropological studies attest to the fact that this was the practice that obtained in this part of the country. In essence, the state construed their power through Slavoz Zizek’s lens the “logic of fetishtic inversion” where these rulers were seen as always already having power rather than because it was conferred on them.

This division of chiefs into the pro- and anti-government factions has led to a privileging of the former by the regime. Evidence of this is the refusal of Radio Bamenda to carry announcements emanating from the Steering Committee of the North-West Fons Association that advised North-Westerners to “distance themselves from the pro-CPDM faction led by Doh Gah Gwanyin of Balikumbat aimed at destabilizing the General Assembly”⁴⁹. The split in this Association threatens to have ominous consequences on the quest for national integration. Already, it is claimed that Doh Gah Gwanyin of Balikumbat used his affiliation with the regime as license to launch a war of

⁴⁷*The Herald*, No. 230, 14 August 1995, p.5

⁴⁸see interview with Chief Henry Namata Elangwe in *The Herald*, No. 223, 20 July 1995, p.6.

⁴⁹Fon Fosi Yakum-Ntaw, Chairman of the Steering Committee, cited in *The Herald*, No.248, 9 October 1995, p.2

expansion against the Bafanji people in June 1995. The Ndop Development and Cultural Association deplored the government's failure to "bring to book the culprits implicated in the Balikumbat-Bafanji conflict"⁵⁰. Attributing this to its complicity, some argued that this increased the probability of a recurrence of this hostilities. Should this sprawl, then it would only help to problematize Biya's claim in an interview in Paris, that the regime "knows its people" (the subtext here is that they are a peace loving people that shun hostilities). Knowing means understanding for purposes of control, as "understanding (is) a precondition for control and control (constitutes) adequate proof of understanding"⁵¹.

Understanding has to be seen as a dynamic process because people ordinarily exist in immediacy. For example, traditional authority is based on the fact that holders of office in this system, who undergo a kind of mystic transubstantiation, are accorded a surplus of power and become objects of fascination.⁵² Subjects have symbolic faith not in the holder of office, that is the face behind the mask, but in the mask and it is this perception of traditional authority that enables it to be invested with surplus morality. It is this social fact that the post-colonial state has sought to exploit. But the intersubjective consensus that had contributed to the naturalization of this form of power relations was/is already being contested. "Moral pluralism" born as a result of the introduction of the post-Enlightenment culture into the "Cameroonian" society problematized the belief in transubstantiation. Endowed with a plurality of norms or multiple cognitive closures as a result of his historical placement, the ordinary Cameroonian now sees traditional power system as a "natural artifice"⁵³. Whereas the system had appeared natural in the "pristine" or pre-colonial state, it is now perceived as a man-made construct that can be deconstructed. By implication, these power relations which create truth and the power effects that truth creates can always be contested. Thus, the deference to

⁵⁰cited in *The Herald*, No. 229, 10 August 1995, p.2

⁵¹Chinua Achebe, "Colonialist Criticism" in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (eds.) (1995), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, p.58

⁵²Slavoj Zizek,(1994), *For They Know Not What They Do*, London: Verso, pp. 247 & 255.

⁵³Agnes Heller (1990), *Can Modernity Survive?*, Cambridge: Polity, p.145.

traditional authority is today seen as a discursive option that contributes to cultural or structural violence.

Consequently, traditional rulers whose powers are no longer considered sacrosanct can also suffer from a deficit of legitimacy. In Bali-Kumbat, for example, Fon Galabe Doh Gah Gwanyin was summarily divested of authority and his palace stormed for purportedly rigging by stuffing ballot boxes in the March 1992 Parliamentary elections in favour of Biya's CPDM. By cursing him in public, his subjects even refused him the concession of politeness that Bourdieu sees as engendering or appearing to contain political concessions⁵⁴. Conscious of the extent to which subjects could go to disidentify with their rulers, other traditional rulers no longer profess (an accumulated) disregard for the views of their subjects. Only by being responsive to them can do these rulers become virtuous. Virtuosity, Machiavelli insisted should be hallmark of leadership in a system that uses the hereditary principle of succession⁵⁵. Mistaking this homology between the office/interests of the chief and those of his subjects for subservience of the latter, the state sought to harness chiefs who were supposedly the voice of the people to it⁵⁶. Consequently, in the October 1992 Presidential elections, Biya saw a pledge from the chiefs of the Western Province that the people would vote massively for him as a contract. A

⁵⁴Pierre Bourdieu (1977), *Outline of A Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. . In order to pre-empt another incident like this that erodes customary practice, the Ndop Development and Cultural Association in a meeting with all their chiefs cautioned them not to get entangled in politics. see *The Messenger*, No.004, 19 May 1993, p.6.

⁵⁵cited in Ornulf Gulbrandsen (1995), "The King Is King By the Grace of the People: The Exercise and Control of Power in Subject-Ruler Relations" in *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, Vol. 37, No.3, p.417.

⁵⁶Other African leaders such as General Sani Abacha of Nigeria have entered into collusion with the chiefs against the people who protested against the environmental damage that oil exploitation was causing in the region. In this particular case, Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa who created the Movement for Saving the Ogoni People (MOSOP), was executed by Abacha's regime on the pretext that he had been instrumental in the killing of chiefs in this region who colluded with the regime. Yet, as has been pointed out, the killing of the chiefs cannot be attributed to Sara-Wiwa but to a radical wing of the MOSOP comprised mostly of unemployed and disaffected youths that refused the non-violent strategy of MOSOP. see Marc-Antoine Perouse(1995) "Ken Saro-Wiwa ou comment fabriquer un martyr ogoni" in *Le Monde*, 16 Novembre, p.13.

disavowal of their chiefs by the people voted overwhelmingly for Ni John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) was construed within official circles, as mirrored by several broadcasts of Cameroon Radio and Television, as a betrayal of Biya by the people of the Western Province.

Similarly, it is this conviction of a homology between the interests of chiefs and those of their subjects that prompted the regime's quest to have a stranglehold over the enthronization of chiefs. In Foumban, following the death of Sultan Seidou Njoya, it intervened to have its candidate, Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, a CPDM stalwart and Minister in Biya's regime to be enthroned over the designated heir, Aboubakar Njoya. To this end, it used Jean Fochive, the Secretary of State for Internal Security, to mediate with the *Kom*, the Court dignitaries who supervise the application of the Bamoum tradition. This incensed the Bamoums who felt impotent at this point⁵⁷. Government intervention in the Bamoum case however caused others to be more cautious as demonstrated in the Nso case. Here the regime in the wake of the death of the Fon of Nso tried to have its candidate rather the rightful claimant enthroned by allegedly bribing some of the custodians of the throne⁵⁸. Its plans were successfully contested only because Shey Paul Ntasin was finally crowned as Fon Sehm Mbinglo by "Ngwerong" an institution that serves a watchdog function at a different site. Rather than use the Shu-Fai Ndzendzev's premises as is the convention, it crowned the fon at the palace.

I am sceptical that the ruling elite would acquire the political dividends that it seeks by assuming traditional titles or co-opting traditional office holders. The glaring disparities in the returns that huge investments in the acquisition of titles yield, thus the failure of initiation to increase the scarce value of the initiate vis-a-vis the uninitiated, is evidence of the ineffectiveness of this "style shift". A resounding repudiation of the CPDM as witnessed by the vote for the SDF in the October 1992 election in the constituencies of the Prime Minister and the Vice Prime Minister (78387 to 3541 and 20467 to 1965 votes respectively) bear ample testimony to this end⁵⁹. In some cases the disidentification is so complete

⁵⁷for details, see *Africa Confidential*, Vol.33,No.19.,p.1.

⁵⁸for an account of the controversy surrounding this enthronization, see *Cameroon Post*, No. 0182, 22 September 1993, pp. 9-13.

⁵⁹ for other cases, see *L'Expression*, No. 015, 17 Novembre 1992, p.8

that these officials suffer from social ostracization and even social death, despite their initiation. In one such case, children who normally help to push vehicles on roads that become impassable during the rains asked a Minister to push his own vehicle, refusing even the money that he was offering them for the service. The acquisition of titles as a technique of “governmentality” that gives the semblance that politics and force are not necessary to transform post-colonial Cameroon has been rendered inefficacious by the decolonization of consciousness.

Framing the Cameroonian Subject: Some Implications Considered

An overreliance by the members of the hegemonic class on the pluralization of their identities, the acquisition of traditional titles and the surplus powers of traditional authority for the realization of national integration is attributable to the peculiar framing of the subject or individual. Insofar as historical narrativity helps to structure reality, there can be no denying that the subject was disarticulated in pre-colonial society. But the continued relevance of this view has to be interrogated in post-colonial Cameroon for the advent of colonialism led to a discontinuity in African history. As indicated above, it also introduced a new cognitive closure through which the Cameroonian perceives the world. As a result, the Cameroonian is now endowed with two cognitive closures, a fact that contributes to his situational indeterminacy. One can begin to talk of the multiple (dis)located individual. In this instance, Jane Austin’s observation that “character is elusive and that to observe anyone, however closely, is to be misled, but we may never learn until we are misled”⁶⁰ becomes more cogent. But as Lawrence E. Hazelrigg notes unpredictability does not inhere from this indeterminacy; rather the point is that the “determinate relations constitutive of the character are nonlinear in dynamics”⁶¹. Driven by the will to power, the regime denies this or feigns ignorance of indeterminacy, especially in the case of the woman that is doubly excluded – first at a woman in a patriarchal society and as a result of her marginalization in the capitalist

⁶⁰P. Honan(1987), cited Lawrence E. Hazelrigg(1991), “The Problem of Micro-Macro Linkage: Rethinking Questions of The Individual, Social Structure and Autonomy of Action” in *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, Vol. 11, p.230

⁶¹Ibid.

system of production. In this post-colonial state, the woman's exclusion has been furthered by projecting the denial of difference onto a conveniently abstracted "collective will".

Rather than cover over the very real contradictions within the strategic collectivity of nationalism – conflict of gender in this case - it has only helped to exacerbate them. Arguably, a politics of presence that guarantees the representation of female voices at the decision making table can help reverse this. The regime seemingly subscribed to this logic when it created a ministry of women's affairs. And Yaou Assiatou as Minister of Social and Women's Affairs seemed to affirm this when she declared on the eve of the Beijing Conference on Women that it was very sensitive to the interests of women. In other words, this was tantamount to recognizing her agentic capacity, a guaranteed that her ontological value would no longer be attributable to just her sexual and maternal body. To a regime that valued simulacrum and construes the woman as a single monolithic subject (incarnated by Yaou Aissatou), this declaration was supposed represented not just politics but policy. But it failed to have the same resonance among women. Not assuaging their concerns, notably the feminization of poverty that was a result of their colonization and marginalization, it left open the window for an organized resistance by women.

Admittedly, James Scott has indicated in another context that the only resource that the poor possess is symbolic power. But the Cameroonian is seen as metonymic of society and therefore a guarantor of its continuity. Though not possessing land, she has usufructory rights to land and therefore power. As aptly portrayed by Mitzi Goheen, men own the land and women own the crops! Because crops are fungible, it enables the woman to begin to accumulate some wealth.⁶² Thus, largely excluded from the capitalist (cash crop) economy, trade in food crops became a means to accumulate not only symbolic but also financial capital. Against this backdrop, one can understand the ire of the women when, for example, Alhadji Dampulo's cattle destroys several acres of Irish potatoes, beans and cocoyams valued at several tens of millions francs CFA on farms that belonged to more than one hundred and sixty women. To them, this constitutes libertinage that is seen as a male trait that basically

⁶²see for example, Mitzi Goheen,(1993), *Les champs appartiennent aux hommes, les récoltes aux femmes: accumulation dans la région de Nso* in Peter Geschiere & Piet Konings *Itinéraires d'Accumulation au Cameroun*, Leiden Paris: ASC & Karthala, pp.241-272.

misrepresents everyday life in the village. This view is only reinforced by the failure of the local government officials, mostly male, to send a team to evaluate the extent of the damage.

Alhadji Dampulo who is a member of the Central Committee of the ruling CPDM refused paying compensation for the damaged crops because the fon, with whom he was in cahoots had purportedly ceded part of this communal land to him. Public knowledge of this transaction only further incensed the women as *Takembeng* had successfully resisted the state following its imposition of a state of emergency in the North-West Province in 1992. Still feeling empowered as a result of this, the women marched on the Provincial capital and blocked traffic on the main artery leading to the Provincial seat of government. By so doing, they engaged the state frontally. Seeking to avoid any skirmish that could degenerate into a full blown revolt, the Governor sent a representative to plead with them to return to the village. But their resolve was unshaken as captured thus “we cannot have confidence in you. What has happened to the evaluation team that the government promised to send to Big Babanki? We want a solution here and now”.⁶³ Plausibly, these women who in the Hegelian conception would be seen as “unreflective” were conscious of that fact the permanent alienation of this piece of land, the most fertile in the area, would only lead to the (re)production of (their) poverty. Their reaction therefore validates Eric Wolf’s contention that rural uprisings are inevitable in cases where capitalist expansion is carried out at the expense of peasant dislocation⁶⁴.

The government, on the other hand was more concerned with what it saw as the attempt to erase the boundaries between the local and the national space by the women, an act that would bring to the fore contradictions that it had sought to cover over by harping on a convenient collective will or the one privileges national subjectivity. Land problems are supposed to be settled locally. That is, its repertoire of contention (jacqueries) is local and patronized⁶⁵. The attempt by local functionaries to restrict the movement to one locale can

⁶³*The Herald*, 12 November 1994, p.5

⁶⁴Eric Wolf(1969), *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, New York: Harper and Row, passim.

⁶⁵for a discussion of the distinction between local and national repertoires of contention, see Sidney Tarrow (1995), *Power in Movement*, op. cit.,pp.32 & 38

be construed as an implicit acknowledgement of the power of local movement to produce cultural identities. As Laclau argues “The production of an effect constructs the identity of the agent generating it”.⁶⁶ And since these movement struggle over the cultural value of key features of the interactive world – the ability to make apparent one set of values different from the extant ones – state functionaries feared that its occupation of space in Bamenda, the seat of oppositional politics, will ultimately contribute to a contestation of its control of normative homogeneity in this space. This did not portend well because it could ultimately snowball to the national territory since the powerless seemingly took their political cues from this town. Clear evidence of in Cameroon’s political grammar is the phrase *qu’est-ce que les gens de Bamenda ont dit?* (What is the position of Bamenda on this issue?).

As this case shows, the members of the ruling class believed that with the complicity of *fons*, they could appropriate communal lands at will. Despite the 1974 Land Ordinance providing for land registration in Cameroon, the right of every Cameroonian, this law failed to level the playing field. Since law is the weapon of the strong, it is not surprising that it led to a differential access to land. Privileged were mostly the members of the petty bourgeoisie, that is the bureaucratic, business and agricultural bourgeoisie. Because of this, freeing land from its attachments to patrimonial lineage has not necessarily led to the democratization of the agrarian economy as postulated by Alexis de Tocqueville; rather it has had a perverse effect, i.e., differential access to ownership of land, amongst them the double marginalization of woman. Already marginalized from the political process through her construction and insertion into the state as social minor, she is now being marginalized in the registration of land as she does not have the “connections” effected by linking economic and sociopolitical capital, to penetrate the networks involved in the registration process. Depriving her of the means of production would lead to the “proletarianization” of the rural areas. Insofar as the state is complicit in this process, this threatens to have negative repercussions on the motivational deficit of the woman vis-a-vis imagining the nation.

Invariably, the woman for whom space is still localized, to a great extent, would be trapped in a new power relationship that would be ushered in by the

⁶⁶ Ernesto Laclau (1990), *Contingency, hegemony, universality: Contemporary dialogues on the Left*, London, Verso, p.211

capitalist mode of production. Whereas this sort of relations existed already, they have been accommodated by society because their articulation with the pre-capitalist mode of production. Land registration⁶⁷ to elites that portends an end of the articulation of these two modes would therefore entail a loss of any personal independence of the woman. Deprived of the means of production, she would become a mere force of production. An immediate impact of this would be a simple reproduction squeeze at the level of the various households and a loss of control over her everyday life. All of these trends signal reinforcement, if not a re-imposition of male dominance, the corollary being her redomestication. Unable to participate in public debates and formal institutions as a consequence, she fails to meet this minimum requirement of deracination which the Jacobins saw as a requisite for citizenship. Her resistance in this instance is tantamount to a struggle for visibility. It is also a class struggle insofar as it is uncompromising and constitutes a localized struggle against a patrimonial/patriarchal domination. It becomes all the more ferocious when the capitalist economy, epitomized by the state and markets has penetrated a society to an extent that it pre-empts withdrawal into kinship support nets that Goran Hyden has referred to as the “economy of affection”⁶⁸.

An uncritical acceptance of a past, rather than its acceptance as a discursive option has provided a rationale for this placement. But the eruption of these women into public space – challenging its partitioning - as demonstrated in the cases of *Anlu* and *Takembeng* in the North-West Province⁶⁹, where women have acted as defenders of peace in society begins to show the elusiveness of their character. Informed by narratives from the past, which the dominant patriarchal discourse has struggled to erase, it becomes part of the cultural consciousness

⁶⁷The 1976 Land Ordinance proclaimed that all land within the eminent domain of the state was state property and that only the state had the right to alienate land. It further stipulated that even land that was effectively occupied had to be registered within a ten year period.

⁶⁸Goran Hyden (1980), *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and the Uncaptured Peasantry*, London: Heinemann, passim.

⁶⁹see inter alia, Eugenia Shanklin (1990), “Anlu Remembered: The Kom Women’s Rebellion of 1958-61” in *Dialectical Anthropology*, No.15, pp.159-181 & Nantang Jua(forthcoming), *Bringing the People Back In: The Democratic Problematique In Cameroon*, esp. Chap.3, mimeo.

of the people⁷⁰. Insofar as these suppressed narratives shaped the women's mode of feeling or empowered them in their political action constitute, they constituted a crucial resource in determining their view of the field of political possibility. This recognition underwrites the argument for the existential quality in the making of history, both as event and narrative. And overlooking it would be synonymous to disowning the history of agency and thereby totally discount the creative force of human emotion unaccounted for or reduced to structural determinism⁷¹.

Albeit attempts by functionaries to cordon off this protests, notably to Babanki, it has still engendered generalized opportunities of cycle of protests that have awakened the historical consciousness of women in other ethnic groups. Exemplary of this is the Bakweris. This was captured in a letter to *Cameroon Post* by a woman thus: "I envy those brave *Takembeng* women because they remind me of what women in my beloved Bakweri "tribe" used to do several decades ago.... They were fearless in judging cases. They were a symbol of justice and decency. They were an embodiment of pride and healthy leadership..."⁷². It is the case that coverage of these events by the electronic and print media have made them instantly available to others thereby fostering cultural pluralism in the country. Cultural pluralism plays an inordinate part not only in defining who people should be but also the roles that they should play in society. They enrich the cultural repertoire thereby adding to the collective memory that is the intersubjectively available knowledge of events in post-colonial Cameroon. It is in this sense that one can accept Benedict Anderson's idea of simultaneous time in *Imagined Communities* which helps in transforming consumers into immigrants. Given this, a generalized resistance by the women that does not augur well for *nationisme* is a possibility.

To a large extent, the foregoing examples signal that the Cameroonian woman cannot be construed as a single monolithic subject. Her resistance to

⁷⁰see Pearl Robinson (1994), "The National Conference Phenomenon in Francophone Africa" in *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, pp. 575-610.

⁷¹Begona Aretxaga (1993), "Striking with Hunger: Cultural Meanings of Political Violence in Northern Ireland" in Kay B. Warren (ed.), *The Violence Within*, Boulder, CO: Westview press, p.224

⁷². *Cameroon Post*, 29 September 1993, p.2.

glaring injustice has helped to render visible her role in politics. Note has to be taken of this fact for insofar as the hegemonic project is predicated on a patriarchal discourse, there is a probability that it would be contested by the woman. To the extent that this breeds *resentment* which Nietzsche sees as arising from accumulated feelings of repression, hatred and envy, I would contend that the failure to articulate a discourse that reinscribes the woman in the state on an equal footing as her male counterpart does not portend well for the chances for national integration. Not even creative ingenuity can stop her from claiming to agency.

Conclusion

Unable to appeal to a *volke* in constructing the post-colonial state, the first generation leadership opted for *nationisme*. Any stress on nation building has largely been “an ideological defence of the colonial heritage (that became) the system of state” and failed to “reflect a genuine desire to create a new national society”⁷³. To cover over this, the leadership of this post-colonial state sought to enable a collective buy in by reinscribing and recontextualizing uncontested practices from the pre-colonial state. Thus, it overlooked the fact because of colonization, these supposedly docile subjects were now endowed with two cognitive closures. This has led to the “moral pluralism” of the Cameroonian and therefore contributed to his situational indeterminacy. Beliefs heretofore considered sacrosanct would now be critically confronted. Engendering contestation, it could problematize a core goal of bourgeois anti-colonialism that Frantz Fanon saw as “quite simply ... (to) transfer into native hands ... those unfair advantages which are the legacy of colonialism.”⁷⁴

To enable this, the leadership painted a picture of the subject as “pristine” frozen within pre-colonial society with its train of prejudice rather than deracinated. As a fact, this portrayal foregrounded knowledge as power and not an intersubjective consensus. Against this backdrop, buy in to it depended on its ability to capture individuals that possessed uncontested power in society. It is this conviction that caused it to appoint some fons of the North-West

⁷³Martin Doornbos (1990), “The African State in Academic Debate: Retrospect and Prospect” in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 28, 2, p.196.

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon(1966), *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, p.152

Province, seen as always already possessing power in traditional society, to prebends. Because if this perception, their subjects were bereft of agentic capacity. That people consigned their consciousness to them only on condition that they were perceived as virtuous leaders driven by enlightened self-interest and a concern of pure morality that is the result of an inner drive of human sympathy⁷⁵ was disregarded by this state. This was an inconvenient truth. Subjects benefiting from moral pluralism question the surplus power, or claims thereof, that had been given to the fons that were increasingly preoccupied with their upward mobility. To the extent that this denuded their claims to virtuosity as a mere farce, it also enabled their subjects who now benefited from moral pluralism to deny the status of a religiously interpellated subject. And so they defy their position taking on some issues such as how to vote in elections or in some cases completely disidentify with them. Seen through another prism, this smacks of a contestation of relations of power.

At the local level, contestation by attempts by some fons to surreptitiously alienate communal land, for example as in Babanki, has enabled the formation of cultural identities. Women that are bearers of this new identity are a threat to the state because of their struggle to erase boundaries of challenge an architectural geography and occupy strategic spaces such as Bamenda, the Provincial capital of the North-West Province. What the state resists is not their occupation of this space per se, but its transformative potential, i.e. its potential to take on a national reach. It is the case that coverage of these events by the electronic and print media have made them instantly available to others thereby fostering cultural pluralism in the country. Cultural pluralism plays an inordinate part not only in defining who people should be but also the roles that they should play in society. This subverts *nationisme* which assigns the common man to the role of a “standing reserve” in Heidegger’s usage.

⁷⁵ This is opposed to prudential morality that is driven by self-interest. See, Kwasi Wiredu (2000) “Our Problem of Knowledge: Brief Reflections on Knowledge and Development in Africa” in *African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry* ed. By Ivan Karp & D. A. Masolo, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.184

Chapter Eight

Anglophone Liberation Journalism and National Deconstruction in Cameroon

Francis B. Nyamnjoh

Journalism, Government and Nation-Building in Cameroon

In Cameroon the public service journalist is little more than a public relations (PR) man for the government. He/she is committed much less to the truth and the public than to building a positive image, selling the ideas and promoting the interests of government and the ruling elite. In general any journalist who plays a PR role, “is no longer an active gatherer of information but has a mediating function in that he/she publishes, processed or not, information material made available” by those who have hired him (Kunczik, 1988:172). Often, such PR journalists take for granted the truth of what they are fed which they in turn present to the public as if it were the fruit of professional or disinterested journalism. This category of journalists serve as night-soil men or scavengers for those who hire them.

Although the struggle for decolonisation in Cameroon was genuine in many respects, what Cameroonians got as independence was a mirage, an illusion of freedom and democracy. At ‘independence’ the government identified nation-building and development as priorities. In this, journalists, especially those of the public media, were called upon to play a vanguard role. They were to faithfully transmit government policies, doctrines, thinking and actions to the masses who, even at their best and most creative, were portrayed as having little to say or do that the government could not say or do better.

Journalists of the public media have had very little professional independence from government, which has always claimed to know the interests of the state better than the people it purports to represent. The task of journalists has thus been that of explaining government action and policies to the people, and seldom a question of explaining to government what the people’s real needs and aspirations are. The assumption has been that the people are ignorant and in dire need of information and education on how to

transform their backward traditions and attitudes, and how to be mobilized and set firmly behind the government's modernization program. The people have been expected to execute decisions taken unilaterally by government. The thinking being that it suffices to listen to the media for the government's messages, which if followed without questioning, would bring about salvation and abundance.

Before the official re-admission of multipartyism in December 1990 (see SOPECAM, 1991:57-60), it was subversive to question government policies, outlooks or options by suggesting alternative ways of going about nation-building and national development. There was room only for "constructive criticism", and criticisms were thus considered only when these were made by those who had accepted the system, not by those who did not belong to the ruling party. The government was against the propagation of "unconfirmed news", and such was generally anything printed or broadcast without prior authorization and/or significantly at variance with government views and policies. Even with the current multipartyism, the government has consistently shown itself unable to authorize the broadcast or printing of stories or ideas that differ fundamentally with official tenets, policies and doctrines. Its repression of the critical private press through selective application of administrative censorship, is a further illustration of such government impatience with alternatives (cf. Nyamnjoh, 1995a).

This attitude portrays the government as omniscient and infallible, and as showing preference for a monolithic Cameroon. The government's preoccupation with development media is little more than an alibi that masks a much deeper concern by the ruling elite to reaffirm and consolidate its authority, even to the detriment of individual liberties (Eone, 1986:220). Thus, instead of tackling the "real and substantial differences" of society (Goulbourne, 1987:35), successive governments have tended to hide these differences, opting rather for a repressive centralized state in their pursuit of the 'nation-state' which Smith (1986:230) has termed a 'Western mirage'. To justify repression, they have argued that it is unwise for a country with limited resources "to dissipate its energies in the niceties, or luxuries, of allowing all and sundry to put their views about national matters when the task of prosecuting development is the national project over which independence was fought" (Goulbourne, 1987:36-7). But as Soyinka (1994:7-9) argues, using "the exacting task of nation-building" to justify repression and alienation for their citizens as African leaders have done, is predicated on

the erroneous assumption that democracy and development are strange bed fellows.

The journalists have thus been consistently denied the opportunity to make clear the fact that meaningful development and national integration are achievable not through policies dictated by the arrogance and ignorance of high office, but through popular democratic participation and commitment. Mere legislation or media propaganda conceived by government and directed at the governed, with little attention paid to participation and feedback, are yet to bring about development or a nation-state in Cameroon.

Thus, prior to the multiparty reawakening of 1990, there was little trace of journalistic self-initiative among the bulk of journalists in the public service. Nuvala Fonkem (1989:31), following a content analysis of CRTV radio news bulletins, argues that the journalist was forced by government ownership and control into a position where he was “unable to use his initiative to widen the scope of his coverage of national news as well as deepen the content of the news”. Journalists thus contented themselves with collecting official speeches, texts and communiqués which they commented within the strict limits of what was palatable to government. Internship reports by ESIJY students on Radio Cameroon make interesting reading on this issue (cf. Malam, 1978; Nana, 1981; Obam, 1980; Massaga, 1980).

Current pressures for democratization notwithstanding, the public media have continued in the same PR vein. Their struggles to legitimate or justify government action against a background of relentless attacks from the private press and opposition parties, have only earned them further public disaffection. Instead of adapting in time to accommodate alternative voices, the management of Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) and *Cameroon Tribune* (the public media), refused to alter their image as government’s PR institutions. Some members of the disaffected public corrupted ‘CRTV’ to: ‘Centre de Re-etablissement Total des Voleurs’ or ‘Confused Radio Television’, and journalists of non-Beti origin⁷⁶ who failed to take a critical distance from government and the CPDM were given Beti surnames, while

⁷⁶ President Paul Biya is Beti, and it seems to be taken for granted by the general public that he governs in the interest of the Beti and as such, should draw his greatest support from among them.

the Beti journalists were simply referred to as “griots” (praise-singers).⁷⁷ The creation of a unit in CRTV to monitor anti-government reports in the private media (Nyamnjoh, 1993)⁷⁸, and the constant administrative sanctions against its own critical journalists and against ‘offensive’ investigative journalism, only exacerbated matters.

The reluctance of CRTV to adapt to the changing context was the subject of an open letter by two of its senior journalists - Zacharie Ngniman and Antoine-Marie Ngoni, who complained of their incapacity to practise journalism freely and of CRTV’s lack of credibility. According to the letter, CRTV’s failure to feel the pulse and to adapt accordingly was a serious disservice to the public and a source of malice for most of its journalists. The institution was accused of making its journalists more of politicians than technicians (Ngniman, 1993:24-28). This open letter became a source of worry for the two journalists in whom the government lost faith as mouthpieces (Ngniman, 1993:48-64).

To guarantee that things are done its way, government appoints to positions of responsibility not necessarily those with merit and professional experience, but those politically in tune with the ruling party. This practice

⁷⁷ The public media remained consistent in their pro-government perspective, despite calls for change from the opposition, the private press and members of the public (see *Cameroon Post* N° 59, Wednesday, February 27, 1991, p.2). CRTV was particularly accused of using its programme “Tout sur Tout” (presented by Charles Ndong) to absolve directors and ex-directors of parastatals accused of embezzlement, instead of allowing the law courts to determine their guilt (see *Cameroon Post* N° 45 Thursday October 11-18, 1990; N° 38 Tuesday: July 31 -August”, 1990, p.5; N° 43, Monday September 24-30, 1990, p.1; N° 79 Monday August 12-19, 1991, p.14.). An opinion poll dubbed “Concours’ de Griots”, conducted by *Galaxies* among its readers, revealed that Beti journalists in the public media were judged the most unpopular because of the particularly uncritical manner in which they supported government action (see *Galaxies*, March 12, 1991).

⁷⁸ According to *Le Messager* (No 017 Tuesday February 5, 1991, p.1), this special task force was expected to “address a weekly report to the headquarters ... pertaining to all attacks by the private Press against the government, the CPDM party, national institutions, the functioning and management of state corporations as well as their bosses or against the CRTV.” The reports had to suggest methods of replying by CRTV presented in the form of articles in *Cameroon Tribune* and/or radio and TV features extolling the actions of government in the domain criticised (see also *Challenge Hebdo* N° 0018 du 29 janvier au 06 février 1991, p.1, for more on Mendo Ze’s “Cellule de Suivi des Medias”).

has, according to Bright Nsame,”⁷⁹ given rise to an “over-zealous quest for positions of responsibility and other favours” and journalists may “go to devilish ends and tell blatant intoxicating lies in favour of the regime in place” just to be noticed and rewarded.⁸⁰ There is little communication between management and journalists, except by way of notes of service, queries and sanctions (cf. Tabi, 1994:84-102). What the government wants and gets most of the time, are journalists “confined to the role of praise-singers, churning out shallow press statements that make headline news while corruption, incompetence, economic mismanagement and human rights abuses go unchecked”⁸¹. The strong tendency, Blaise Tsangue affirms⁸², is for the public service journalists “à s’enfermer dans le rôle d’avocats du gouvernement ou du régime.”

Despite eventual and increasing claims of having opened up, the public media remain largely tools of repression, instruments of selective communication; filtering through mostly what they see as good and safe for the government. These media institutions have continued to disseminate the views and values of government and its allies to the detriment of all those

⁷⁹ *Cameroon Post*, N° 0186 October 20 - 27 1993, p.16

⁸⁰ The most zealous supporters of the regime, it has been observed, are journalists of Beti origin (see *Cameroon Post* N° 0208, March 9-16 1994, p.10 for the case of Alain Belibi and Jean-Marie Nka’a). Not only positions but coverage is assigned along ethnic lines (Ntemfac, 1993), especially during periods of tension and political controversy. A telling example was provided by *Challenge Hebdo* (N° 004 du mars 9, 1992, p.13), which monitored the Election Day broadcast in CRTV on the legislative elections of March 1, 1992. All journalists in this example were, like President Biya, of the Beti ethnic group:

Dans ce studio, je suis Jean ATANGANA, j’ai à mes cotes Antoine Marle NGONO, nous avons déployé toute une grande équipe à cette occasion, nous allons prendre à bord de la voiture émettrice Pascal MEBE ABAH, à Maroua Hugues François ONANA; à Garoua Alain BELIBI; à Ngaoundéré Pierre Le Bon ELANGA; à Ebolowa Roger BETALA; à Buea J.P. EFOUBA ONANA; à Bafoussam Alphonse ATSAMA; à Bamenda Sévère AMOUGOU, etc. ...”

⁸¹ *Le Messenger* N° 024 Special Edition, Thursday, April 25, 1991, p.7

⁸² *Le Messenger* N° 260 du 30 avril, 1992

who think and see differently. The general idea has been to inhibit the growth of opposing views or to misrepresent and delegitimize them. CRTV for example, has consistently worked to exclude alternative voices, while consolidating the position of government and its supporters. It has allowed access largely to those least likely to criticise the prevailing distribution of power, while doing everything to exclude real opposition. Thus, for instance, following the October 1992 presidential election when a state of emergency was declared in Bamenda and the SDF leader placed under house arrest, allegations were made by CRTV against John Fru Ndi, yet not a single chance was given him to defend himself or to express his own views.⁸³ The Minister of Communication, Professor Augustin Kontchou Kuoumegni, preferred his monologues on CRTV and *Cameroon Tribune*,⁸⁴ to a challenge by

⁸³ Without access to radio and television, John Fru Ndi had to content himself with the private press and foreign media to disseminate his reaction to the supreme court decision to declare Paul Biya winner of the elections. His self-proclamation as president-elect in Bamenda on October 21, 1992 (see *L'Expression* N° 011 du 22 au 26 octobre, 1992, p.3), would certainly have had a greater effect had it been carried on CRTV, which the government used to dismiss it as “anti-démocratique, grave, anti-nationale, indigne, irresponsable”, and to warn that the government “prendra toutes les mesures qu’impose cette situation” (see also, *Cameroon Tribune* N° 5242 jeudi 22 octobre, 1992). So would have the communiqué issued two days after the state of emergency was decreed and he, John Fru Ndi, placed under house arrest (see *Cameroon Post*, N° 132, October 30 - November 4, 1992, p.5), calling on all Cameroonians in favour of change “not to hesitate, not to relent their efforts but to scrupulously adhere to the plan of action ... of the UNION FOR CHANGE”.

⁸⁴ During one of his press briefings, the minister claimed that “old women were intimidated in Ebolowa ... with the story that Ni Fru Ndi was an emissary from God and that anybody who did not vote for the candidate with the clenched fist would be singled out and meted divine retribution” (see Ngoh Nkwain in *Cameroon Today* N° 13 November 17. 1992, p.10). At another press briefing, the minister insisted that the SDF had a four point diabolical plan “pour remettre la paix en cause au Cameroun.” (see *Cameroon Tribune* N° 5247 mardi 27 octobre 1992 p. 6; and *L'Expression* N° 012, 30 octobre 1992, P. 7). In neither occasion was John Fru Ndi given the opportunity to react to the allegations on CRTV.

According to Antoine-Marle Ngono (interviewed 30/9/94), during the October 1992 presidential elections, the minister personally supervised all political communication at CRTV. The minister, he said, protects access to CRTV jealously; selecting who gets exposure and who does not. Even fellow ministers need authorisation from him to feature on TV.

the SDF campaign manager, Bernard Muna, “to a live debate on the television and radio which you so effectively control and manipulate” (Bernard Muna, press release of 20th October 1992).

Anglophone Journalism of Liberation

If CRTV and *Cameroon Tribune* as institutions have in the face of current demands for democracy maintained their traditional role as government’s public relations institutions, some of their journalists, the Anglophones mainly, have questioned their role as government’s PR journalists, even if only to be guilty, in turn, of PR journalism in favour of the opposition and/or the Anglophone cause.

The Anglophone journalists in the public media have in general, tended to distance themselves from the sort of pro-establishment journalism defined by government and largely taken for granted by their Francophone colleagues. The history of turbulence in the public media is principally one of government’s attempts to streamline the Anglophone journalists. The launching of the SDF in May 1990 led to much witch-hunting against Anglophone journalists in CRTV, whom management identified with the new (‘illegal’) party. Relations between CRTV authorities and critical Anglophone journalists have only grown worse following the institutionalization of multipartyism.⁸⁵ The private press has talked of an “anti-Anglophone campaign” mounted by government and CRTV

⁸⁵Until CRTV management transferred critical Anglophone journalists away from the newsroom or sanctioned them for not following “handed-down” instructions on what and how to report. CRTV newscasts in English were more appreciated even by Francophones. Following a survey of its readers, *Challenge Hebdo* (N° 052 du 18 au 26 decembre 1991, p.7-10) reported that:

Alors que le journal en anglais est cite parmi les 6 meilleures émissions de la CRTV, son homologue en français est l’émission la moins appréciée des Camerounais lecteurs de Challenge Hebdo. Cette place ne saurait surprendre car il a été prouvé que la ligne éditoriale de la CRTV ramait à contrecourant des préférences et des revendications. Les contre-vérités, le culte de la personnalité développée par les journalistes qui présentent le journal en français ont fini par lasser les téléspectateurs.

management.⁸⁶

While some Anglophone journalists in the public media have identified with the PR role expected of them by government, others have opted either to leave the system entirely (e.g. Boh Herbert⁸⁷, Charlie Ndichia⁸⁸, Eric Chinje⁸⁹, Victor Epie Ngome, Orlando Bama, Larry Eyong-Echaw, Ben Bongang and Julius Wamey), or to distance themselves from official rhetoric whenever they can (e.g. Ebssiy Ngum, Wain Paul Ngam and Asonglefac Nkemleke). According to *The Diasporan*⁹⁰, of the nearly 50 reporters and announcers who started or joined television in its first 3 years of existence, 27 (of whom 21 Anglophones) had, by April 1994, “departed in bitterness and disillusionment to seek better climes”. Those who are ready to be PR journalists, propagate the myth that all government and its acolytes do is well and in the best interest of Anglophones and Cameroonians in general, and that the radical opposition, the All Anglophone Conference (AAC), the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM), and the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) are void of true patriots and motivated only by selfish, regional, or tribal self-interests.⁹¹ Among the critical journalists are

⁸⁶ see *Cameroon Post* N° 73 Thursday June 6 - June 13, 1991, p.1; N° 77 Tuesday July 30-August 6, 1991, p.3

⁸⁷ see his interview with *Challenge Hebdo* (N° 045 du 31 octobre au 06 novembre 1991, p.14-15) for his reasons for leaving CRTV and resigning from the civil service.

⁸⁸ For more on Charlie Ndichia and his problems as journalist in Cameroon and in CRTV, see *Le Messenger* N° 024 Special Edition, Thursday April 25, 1991, p.12 and N° 003 Thursday January 23, 1992, p.11.

⁸⁹ For Eric Chinje’s account of why and how he left CRTV, see the Fondation Friedrich-Ebert (1993), *Le Role des Medias dans le Processus Democratique au Cameroun* (P.133)

⁹⁰ See N° 001 of Friday April 14, 1995, which devotes its front and central pages to television in Cameroon, “a revolution that ate its children”. *The Diasporan* is US-based and has as editor-in-chief Julius Wamey.

⁹¹ For an idea of what Anglophones have on their agenda in the current democratisation process, see Atabe Ettankl’s “chronology of the Anglophone struggle” in *Cameroon Post* N° 216. April 29-May 1, 1994, p.10; see also *Cameroon Life* (vol. I N° 3 August 1990, pp. 6-10; vol. I N° 5 October 1990, pp. 6-11; vol. I N° 12 October 1991, pp.26-27; vol. II N° 3 March 1992, pp. 8- 14; vol. III N° 6 July 1992, pp.8-16; vol. II N° 8 May 1993, pp.8-20; vol. II N° 10 October 1993, pp.10-17&24-26)

those who propagate the myth that the radical opposition and extremist pressure groups stand for “the truth” and the best interest of Anglophones or of Cameroon, and that the government and its allies are dissemblers who are motivated by selfish ambitions, the greed for power and other selfish pursuits.

Many Anglophone journalists in CRTV, who rapidly distanced themselves from their role as government spokesmen or mouthpieces following the launching of the SDF, rechanneled their energies in the service of the marginalised Anglophone community. But using the public media to articulate societal problems and aspirations have met with stiff resistance from the authorities and from pro-establishment gate-keeping journalists in positions of responsibility. The turbulent history of critical English language CRTV programs such as “Cameroon Calling” (formally “Cameroon Report”), “Minute by Minute” and “Luncheon Date” are sufficient testimony of government discomfort with Anglophone critical-mindedness and purportedly heightened sense of public accountability.

CRTV management has often silenced or dissipated criticism through the disciplinary transfer of the critical journalists involved. Vociferous and critical newscasters have been moved from the newsroom, some kept away from the air, while others have been recalled to the “ministry of origin” for administrative functions.⁹² Special measures have been taken by management to subject critical Anglophone radio and TV programs to prior administrative censorship. In one such decision by CRTV deputy General Manager Emmanuel Nguimba Nloutsiri⁹³, the crew of “Cameroon Calling” was accused of disrespecting warnings from the hierarchy, by continuing to use the program “to put the government to trial”, question the integrity of the highest authorities in the state and incite the population to revolt, thus

⁹² for examples, see Nyamnjoh (forthcoming) 1995a, *The Mass Media and Democratisation in Cameroon*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung: Yaoundé.

⁹³ see Note de Service N° 00060 de 8 juin 1992, published in *Le Messager* N° 267 du 18 juin 1992. According to the decision, “Cameroon Calling” was thenceforth to be taped and no longer presented live. The taped programme was to be submitted for the critical appreciation of either the Director of Information, his deputy or the editor-in-chief for features. “The certified approval of one of these authorities is necessary before the programme can be broadcast.” These gatekeepers were expected to give a weekly report on the effective implementation of this prescription.

endangering national unity.

As an institution, CRTV has seldom been comfortable reporting the truth about any Anglophone movement, initiative or program of action. An example in this connection is the 3 p.m radio news of Wednesday April 27, 1994 concerning the AACIL. An announcement was read over CRTV to the effect that the AACIL scheduled to hold in Bamenda from April 29 to May 1 had been postponed by the conveners. It was purported to have been signed by Simon Munzu, Carlson Anyangwe and Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad. A claim the three refuted. The AAC spokesman, Simon Munzu, prepared a disclaimer for broadcast by CRTV, but this was rejected. CRTV was even unable to provide Munzu with a copy of the announcement alleged to have been signed by him and his colleagues.⁹⁴

Most Anglophones are of the opinion that CRTV is there not so much to respond to their aspirations, but rather to stifle initiative and sense of identity in them. The choice to construct the **FM** transmitter for the South West province in Douala instead, was criticized by Anglophone interest groups (e.g. the South West Elite Association - SWELA) and by the English-language private press, and taken as another proof of government's bad faith towards the Anglophones. On a visit to CRTV Buea on Tuesday November 16 1993, the General Manager of CRTV explained that the choice of Douala was purely a technical one made by technicians, and not political. According to him, the Japanese engineers who did the feasibility studies during the "ghost town" period in 1991, had combed the South West province thoroughly and found its mountainous nature a disadvantage. Despite his explanation, the Anglophone press and opinion leaders still felt that the decision to construct the transmitter in Douala was political and deliberate by the authorities who are so concerned with the oil in Limbe that they feared what might happen if Buea, given the current trend in sentiments among Anglophones, were to be cut off from the rest of Cameroon and made capital for a seceding Southern Cameroons. So the conviction that the Government wants to be in control of access to broadcast technology, to be able to cut off transmission should need be.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ for more see *Cameroon Post* N° 216 April 29 - May 1, 1994, p.2

⁹⁵ for more on the FM affair see *The Herald* N° 073, Monday January 3-5, 1994, p.3; *Cameroon Post* N° 0191 November 24-December 1, 1993. P.13

Indeed, the Anglophones are so suspicious of government and its designs, that their first instinct is always to disbelieve that the government can act in good faith.⁹⁶ A government which one of them describes as “traditionally cocky, arrogant, lethargic and extremely callous”⁹⁷. In addition, Anglophones generally tend to see Francophones as “fundamentally fraudulent, superficial and given to bending rules: cheating at exams, jumping queues, rigging elections ...” (Victor Epie Ngome, quoted in Atanga, 1994:126). Thus when Bamenda went without television from September 19, 1993 to March 24, 1994, because of a blown electronic tube at the relay centre, there were talks of deliberate victimization by government. Despite expert reports that the failure had been purely technical, the public was not convinced. They insisted that in other places which had suffered similar black-outs (Sangmelima, Ebolowa and Kousseri), the situation had been corrected within two weeks. Why should Bamenda be different, were it not for the government’s decision to deprive its population of television?⁹⁸

To Anglophones, it is clear from the content and language of programs, that television is preponderantly for Francophones. French is the dominant

⁹⁶ In the on-going democratic process, the Anglophone provinces have identified their governors with ruthless repression more than has any other province. The South West provincial governor, for taking the decision in 1993 to use the military to forcibly recover unpaid taxes and to stop smuggling from Nigeria, had his name - Oben Peter Ashu - corrupted to “Obey Peter Shoot”. In the North West province the governor, Bell Luc Rene was nicknamed “Bend Look Grenade”, in protest of the “excessive” use of hand grenades by police, gendarmes and soldiers during the “Ghost Town” period and during the State of Emergency.

⁹⁷ see *Cameroon Post* N° 71 Monday May 27-30, 1991, p.6

⁹⁸ see *Cameroon Post*, April 6-13, 1994, p.2

language⁹⁹ and French interests seem not only more important than English interests, but are even superior to Cameroonian concerns and priorities.¹⁰⁰ It is possible and indeed quite regular that newscasts on CRTV are shifted (displaced) from their normal time slots in order to make way for the transmission of French football encounters. Not once has any English league match been retransmitted in a similar manner, and it is not often that local matches or Cameroon's own international encounters get televised.¹⁰¹

Thus faced with such resistance, critical Anglophone journalists in the public media have, thanks to the December 1990 Freedom of Mass Communication law (cf. SOPECAM, 1991: 32-44), used the English language private newspapers, some of them under pen names, to insert Anglophone problems, concerns and aspirations on the national political, cultural and economic agendas.

Together with their counterparts in the critical English language press, the liberation journalists of the public media are eager to expose the

⁹⁹ Anglophones argue that Francophone disrespect for them is such that even American entertainment programmes originally produced in English are shown on TV dubbed in French. Complaints like the following by Dr.Zama Kimbi Ndefru ILI (See Cameroon Post N° Saturday April 14-21, 1990, P.2), are very frequent in the Anglophone press and are shared by the entire Anglophone community:

The English speaking viewers seem to be placed on a disadvantage even though entertainment programmes like Starcky et Hutch, Arnold et Willie, Colombo, Santa Barbara and Lucky Luke were originally in English. Taxes aside if the rights of all Cameroonians as citizens of this country mean anything, a second channel should be an unquestionable right. The two Cultures have to co-exist on equal basis.

¹⁰⁰ Eric Chinje recalls (see *The Diasporan*, N° 001 of Friday April 14, 1995, p.10) that during his years as editor-in-chief for TV news, there was a strong "Francophone Lobby" the membership of which ranged from a team of police investigators "demanding to know why there was so much English on television", to the French ambassador who claimed that Eric Chinje was not a friend of France ("vous n'etes pas un ami de la France") because Anglophones on TV "were outperforming the Francophones".

¹⁰¹ *La Nouvelle Expression* (N° 015 mars 1993 P.14) has wondered why the General Manager of CRTV "s'obstine à inonder l'écran de la Television Nationale de matches sans importance du championnat français. Cela, alors même que les téléspectateurs qui paient mensuellement la taxe audiovisuelle n'ont même pas le droit de visionner les matches des équipes nationales camerounaises ne serait-ce qu'en diffère."

contradictions and inconsistencies in the policies and actions of a government that is hardly in gear with the Anglophone community in Cameroon. They argue that until government starts addressing the problems of the Anglophone minority¹⁰², it will remain an obstacle to the country's economic progress, to national integration and to social justice. They criticize the rigid suppression by government of contending social forces, especially those of Anglophone origin. They blame most of Cameroon's current socio-political and economic crises on the lack of accountability by successive Francophone dominated governments, and present the Anglophone and 'the good old days' of rigour and selflessness in public service of Southern Cameroons as the model. They identify with and are proud of the achievements of the Anglo-Saxon culture worldwide. Theirs, the Anglo-Saxon culture, "has been tested and its validity adequately proved", and all Anglophones must take advantage of this identity, "rather than seeking to be Francophones only to wind up ridiculous cultural mulattoes to be jeered at and patronized".¹⁰³

From Imposed Unity to Negotiated Conviviality

The post-colonial state in Cameroon has retained most of what it inherited from its French colonizers, while actively seeking to minimize or obliterate its Anglo-Saxon heritage. Despite declarations and statements recognizing the bi-cultural status of Cameroon and emphasizing the need to

¹⁰² Anglophones generally tend to believe that their union with Francophone Cameroon has not worked in their interest. They feel a sense of alienation and marginalisation, and a lot of them, persuaded by the arguments of the CAM, the AAC or the SCNC, have developed an interest for the reinvention of the state of West or Southern Cameroon. Indeed, as Dr Munzu, Dr Anyangwe, Lawyer Elad and Mr. Benjamin Itoe, have argued (see *Le Messenger* N° 016 Monday April 27, 1992, p.1 I), "In view of the distinct history, experiences and characteristics of their territory, the inhabitants of the British Southern Cameroon and their leaders would not have voted in favour of reunification with the Republic of Cameroon in 1961 if at that date, reunification had been presented to them as a process whereby, within a period of ten years, their territory would be annexed by the Republic of Cameroon".

¹⁰³ *Cameroon Post* N° 71 Monday May 27-30, 1991, p.6

authenticate and institutionalize bilingualism, the demographically superior Francophones have been less interested in harmonization than in assimilation (Fonlon, 1964; Bayart, 1980:165; Nyamnjoh, 1995b). The Anglophones thus see themselves as second-class citizens far removed from the centres of real decision-making and action, expected to enforce decisions taken neither with their participation nor consent. Political power is firmly centralized in the hands of the Francophones, who, by limiting the authority and influence of the Anglophone leadership, have destroyed the only real link that could have kept them in touch with 30% of the people they govern and claim to want to forge a nation-state with. Anglophones participating in or collaborating with the present government are seen and treated as honorary Francophones, and therefore willing colliders with the forces of oppression.

Culturally, although the Francophone leadership has shown some awareness of a cultural problem in Cameroon, especially through their declarations and statements, they have made little concrete effort to resolve it. They have failed to take or encourage the initiative towards reducing the dominance of Francophone cultural values, and to create an atmosphere of conviviality between the two value systems. Despite much official rhetoric, there has been little real institutionalization of bilingualism. French is given prominence over English despite the fact that they are both official languages and should, in normal circumstances, be given equal status in a bicultural setting. On most official documents, signposts and other public notices, the French letters are written in big scripts while the English words are either missing or written in small letters. To survive in the civil service the Anglophones must, as a matter of necessity, speak and understand French, while learning English to the Francophone is more a matter of prestige than necessity. Concerning official documents, it is stated, as a rule, that in case of a clash in interpretation of the meaning of a given text the French text should be considered the authentic version. The Anglophones have seen themselves consistently denied every political avenue to articulate their cultural woes and redress the imbalance. Their struggles over the last twelve years to salvage the General Certificate of Education (GCE) from destruction by successive Francophone ministers of education are amply illustrative of government-inspired hostility to Anglo-Saxon values in Cameroon (cf. Nyamnjoh, 1995b).

Economically, at independence, the Cameroonian government adopted the policies of planned liberalism and of self-reliant and balanced regional development, with the aim of correcting the imbalances of the past and

bringing the fruits of success to all (cf. Ndongko, 1980, 1982, 1985). The government has failed to achieve this goal; failure due, according to the Anglophones, largely to a policy by Francophones to make themselves the sole beneficiaries of the rich natural resources of Cameroon, even those found and exploited in the Anglophone regions of the country. Instead of change for the better in the course of time, the situation has worsened as the dominance of the Francophone colonial heritage has been compounded by new inequalities, injustices and insensitivities on the Anglophones.

The liberation journalists see the nation-building practised in Cameroon as an attempt by the Francophones to impose their culture and values on the Anglophone minority. Such nationalism, they have argued, is false, because it excludes popular participation and thrives on force and fear instead of democracy. To pursue their version of national unity and integration, the largely Francophone leadership has preferred to rely on civil servants and the army as their power base, rather than on mass movements and popular participation. These leaders have created and sustained political institutions not to mobilize and conscientise the masses for collective interests, but to curb mass involvement, to control and to strengthen their omnipotence on national life (cf. Bayart, 1980, 1985:141-182; Geschiere, 1995:125-163); with the result being widespread passivity and cynicism in the masses in general, in the villagers who believe that “la Politique, c’est l’affaire des Grands” of the cities (Geschiere, 1995:126), and in the Anglophones who consider themselves particularly sidestepped.

By distancing themselves from pro-establishment PR journalism, the Anglophone journalists of liberation are aware of the importance of having independent media and media policies defined by an independent collectivity, and not simply by an individual, minority or linguistic group, no matter how justifiable the latter’s claims to the custodianship of the state. But their bitter reaction to government impatience with competing voices, has occasioned a journalism of anger and disillusionment with little room for professionalism. Yet such journalism of anger and disillusionment, no matter how attractive it may be to a community desperate for change, is little informed by the professional canons of honesty, accuracy and fairness that are supposed to make of every news-story a value-free product accessible to all, irrespective of language group, sex, religion or ethnic origin. The ability of liberation journalists to give all sides of the story, to avoid biased language, comment and opinion in their news-stories and reports, has been crippled by the need

to present the Anglophones as a righteous community struggling to stay good and upright in a country turned into a Sodom and Gomorrah by sensuous, irresponsible squander-maniacs and degenerates - the Francophones. The liberation journalists love of honour, power and fame with their community often blinds them to their professional beliefs and ethics. Much as the Anglophone community would like its journalists to see things their way, it is in the interest of both the journalists and the community to face up to reality. For social truth is a matter of consensus between competing perspectives, especially in a plural context like Cameroon where how one perceives a phenomenon is contingent on one's cultural or ideological standpoint.

It is evident that the political, cultural and economic marginalisation of the Anglophones, together with the pervasive presence of France and *la francophonie*, have failed to inspire Anglophones to wholeheartedly jump on the bandwagon of national unity and integration. Instead of seeking congruence between polity and a consensus version of the French and English colonial heritage, successive Francophone-dominated governments have, official declarations and statements of intent on the importance of bi-culturalism notwithstanding, embarked on what Anglophones believe to be a secret agenda aimed at the asphyxiation of their culture. Thus making nation-building seem to most of them as nothing other than a systematic attempt by their Francophone counterparts to assimilate them.

The fact that the nation-state is an illusion, calls for possible alternatives, especially as its pursuit has meant the exclusion of Anglophones from significant political and cultural participation, and from the benefits of economic 'development'. The "superior attitude" promoted by government on the part of the Francophones has only alienated the Anglophones further. In an era like this when people are increasingly conscious of their democratic rights, unity and integration are most unlikely to be achieved through an attempt by the state to suppress ethnic, cultural or linguistic differences, but rather, through allowing the various communities the freedom to live their similarities while negotiating the best way possible out of their differences. This implies neither rejecting nor legitimating certain possibilities *a priori*, but letting the people decide which form of cultural and political existence unites or integrates them best.

Anglophones reject an idea of nation-building based on cultural assimilation and the glaring tribalism of those in high office. To them, any

nation-building project predicated on such shaky foundations can only lead to further disintegration of the type witnessed in Eastern Europe in 1989. Meaningful nation-building can only be one that takes into account the cultural differences in Cameroon, and judiciously seeks to negotiate a middle ground for competing value systems. It should be founded on consensus, not imposition or assimilation.

Thus the conclusion that only media which guarantee cultural continuity for the Anglophones, ensure popular participation and horizontal communication among the peoples of Cameroon, denounce government high-handedness and impatience with competing voices and alternative outlooks, and criticize government's failure to assert itself and defend Cameroonian economic and cultural 'interests vis-a-vis France, could harness Anglophone support for a nation-state project.

If journalists and the media are to make an active and positive contribution to national integration, their focus must be on the common denominators, and not on what puts the communities asunder. The journalist, to paraphrase Kunczik (1988:235-6), must not be aggressive and negative, but critically distant and fair. He/she must always ask him/herself: Is my report fair?; and must avoid sensationalism and the deliberate falsification of facts. Journalists must also avoid scapegoatism - that is, giving the impression that there is an individual, a group (ethnic, linguistic, religious, political, etc.) or a section of society' that is responsible for all the problems in that society. Journalists, both French-speaking and English-speaking, must show much more interest in the predicament of one another's communities; they must not give the public any reason to suppose that the problems of this or that community are much less an issue with journalists of this or that linguistic group.

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Regionalism and National Integration in Cameroon: A Psychocultural Perspective

A. Bame Nsamenang

The story of regionalism and the integration of people begins with the oldest human survival activities, the gathering of fruits and the hunting of game. But discourse on regionalism and the integration of people in the geo-political expression subsumable, for convenience of discourse, under the name Cameroon begins with its chequered colonial history and extends beyond its post-colonial period to the political intrigues and social engineering of post-independence inept attempts at nation-building.

The paper begins with a description of Cameroon's pluralism. It then proceeds to explore some conceptual models that underlie President Paul Biya's policy of integration, which stands in sharp contrast to his predecessor's pre-unification declaration at the United Nations in 1960, that "the firmness and clarity of" la Republique du Cameroun "should not be interpreted as a desire" to "sound a death knell to the hopes of our brothers in the Southern Cameroons". It also critically appraises efforts to regionalize and integrate the constituent elements of the Cameroons and explores the psychosocial parameters for managing collective multiculturalism. Prior to delving into an examination of these issues and given that the concept of national integration is rooted in claims of territoriality, we briefly trace the evolution of the territorial or ethnic imperative in human affairs. Our thesis is that solutions to problems of integrating several assertive identities in culturally plural societies are best found by the people themselves within supportive frameworks of liberal democracy, political fair play and participative governance.

Origins and Evolution of Territoriality and Ethnicity

In the beginning there were the gatherers of fruits and vegetables who later became hunters of game. We assume that these earliest Cameroonians, like their peers elsewhere, made no specific claim to land or territory.

However, over the centuries, gathering and hunting, the oldest economic motives, attained a competitive edge (Mari, 1986). With population pressure on land resources, fruit fields and hunting grounds increasingly became scarce and competition intensified. Questions and disputes over who had rights to territory and spheres of control become the identity criteria for feelings of collective security, hence the need for people to band together (Nsamenang, 1992).

As animosity and dispute over rights to territory intensified, the demarcation of fields and differentiation among hunters and gatherers began to take shape. Since it was confrontational and a matter of mutual injury, its vestiges have persisted across millennia to our day. Thus, the inauguration of the phenomenon of collective identity and the distinction of people into ‘we’ and ‘they’; this is the precursor of ethno-racial differentiation that has persisted forcefully to our day (Nsamenang, 1992). Among Africans, the claim to ethnic or ancestral land or territory is deeply emotive because, “where the ancestors are buried, there the soul of the clan resides, and there the prospects of the health of the next generation should be sought” (Mari, 1986, p. 270); hence their emotional attachment to ancestral or ethnic land.

Historical Context of Cameroon’s Diversity

Cameroon is “the one spot in the black continent where all the African peoples meet” (Fonlon, 1976). It is the historical “cross-roads for the extensive migrations of many peoples” (Smithsonian Institution, 1984). Cameroon’s diversity even extends to its name. The various European permutations, e.g., Camarones in Spanish, Kamerun in German, Cameroon in English, and Cameroun in French all refer to the same territory Europeans carved out at the 1884 Berlin Conference. Cameroon’s extraordinary diversity originates from both ingenious and external sources and is manifests in almost every aspect of the state: colonial, political, ecological, economic, cultural and ethno-linguistic components. The ingenious source derives from the about 250 ethnic cultures found in its different ecological zones. The external facet revolves partly on the sorry story of European imperial legacies on Cameroon.

Cameroon’s colonial history began with the steady probing of the West Africa Coast in the early 15th century by Portuguese sailors and merchants in their search for a sea route to India (Liebenow, 1986). This led to their arrival

on the river Wouri in 1472. However, by the early part of the 19th century, Great Britain was the dominant power along the Cameroon coast (Fonlon, 1976). Germany became interested in this 'land of prawns' later and her eventual occupation of the Cameroons was brought to an abrupt end by the First World War. After the brief period during which the Cameroons was administered as a condominium by the Allied Military Administration, it was shared, very unequally, between France and Great Britain (Fonlon, 1976). The British (Southern) Cameroons became part of the British Empire from 1922 and of the British Commonwealth from 1931. In 1961 the Southern Cameroons suspended her membership of the Commonwealth to unify with the French Cameroons, that is, with La Republique du Cameroun.

Significant differences existed between the British and French Cameroons in natural resources as well as in all spheres of state organization and governance. For instance, apart from their unequal size and population, the British and French Cameroons were characterized by economic inequalities prior to unification; to a large extent these disparities remain. Unfortunately, analyses of economic inequalities were falsified to the detriment of Southern Cameroons. Three examples of intellectual dishonesty and pseudoeconomic analyses that gave La Republique du Cameroun instant advantage over Southern Cameroons and induced it to embark on an annexationist mission under the guise of national integration are summarized in the following terse remarks: "... the east [i.e., the Republic of Cameroon] had a greater potential than west [i.e., Southern Cameroons] ...". (Ndongko, 1975); "... the east has historically been more affluent and better endowed than the west ..." (Kofele-Kale in Benjamin, 1980); and "... left on its own, the West Cameroon government was incapable of maintaining a viable economy without federal assistance ..." (Benjamin, 1980). Today we are living witnesses to the truth about the economic potential and contribution of the Southern Cameroons to the Republic of Cameroon.

La Republique du Cameroun and the Southern Cameroons are two states whose separate colonial experiences and ethnic roots "provided marked contrasts not only in language, law, administration and education, but also in such less tangible matters as political style and expectations" (Levine, 1976, P. 273). Parallel to such inequalities are other remarkable disparities. For example, French-speaking Cameroonians have monopolized political power since unification and consumed 83.5% of investments in agriculture as against 16.5% for English-speaking Cameroonians. Thus, the history of

Cameroon contributes to its socio-political fragmentation. Cameroon is still a mosaic of linguistic and ethnic groupings because national policy has failed to accept the burden of the past, particularly the bicultural and bilingual legacies of Cameroon.

Acculturation and Integration in Plural Societies

Acculturation has been defined as culture change that results from continuous, first-hand contact between two distinct cultural groups (Redfield et al., 1936). This section overviews the process of acculturation in general and in particular the conceptual models of integration.

In culturally plural societies individuals and groups must make two important decisions (Berry, 1992): whether one's own ethnic identity and customs are of value and should be retained and protected or whether inter-ethnic contacts are of value and should be sought and sustained. These are essentially questions of attitudes and values. Berry's (1992) research in this domain has generated a fourfold classification of acculturation strategies and outcomes or options available to individuals and groups in plural societies. These are assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization.

The assimilation option implies relinquishing one's cultural identity and taking on that of the larger society. It can take place by way of absorption of a non-dominant group into a dominant culture, or it can be by way of merging into many groups to form a new society, as in the 'melting-pot' concept. The integration option implies the maintenance of some cultural integrity of the group (i.e., some reaction or resistance to change) as well as the movement to become an integral part of a larger societal framework (i.e., adjustment). Thus, the option taken with integration is to retain some cultural identity but move to join the dominant group. When this strategy or policy is adopted, there are a number of distinguishable ethnic groups and cultural blocks, all cooperating within a larger social system. On the other hand, when the pattern is imposed by the dominant group, segregation to keep people in 'their place' appears. When the minority group decides to maintain its traditional way of life outside full participation in the larger society, separation appears. In this sense, segregation and separation differ mainly with respect to whether the dominant or minority group or groups determine the outcome of acculturation. Marginalization is the scenario in which groups lose cultural and psychological contact, at least in relative

terms, with both their traditional culture and the larger society, whether by exclusion or withdrawal. Stonequist (1935) considers this form of acculturation to constitute the classical situation of marginality which somehow seems to characterize contemporary Southern Cameroonians.

Conceptual Models of Integration

In order to forge an identity out of their fragmented states, most sub-Saharan political leaders have adopted integration as a national goal. According to Levine (1976), some of them use this term itself, while others speak of 'national unity', **ujamaa** ('familyhood'), 'national authenticity', or some other similar term. As a political symbol, this term is rich in positive general connotations as it evokes a sense of purpose for the achievement of national goals above and beyond parochial interests. However, because of its ambiguity, it has a widely varied content, because the literature on political integration provides high-sounding definitions that do little to lessen the term's basic ambiguity. National integration is most commonly understood either as a goal, as a process, or as both (Levine, 1976). Seen as a process, its most important component is the growth or development, or both, of identities and loyalties whose foci are national rather than local. A number of conceptual models have been offered to explain this process. But for limitation of space, we will ignore the multi-ethnic status of Cameroon and illustrate this process with Cameroon's two cultural communities, the Anglophone minority and the Francophone majority.

Our first framework, a 'group at war' model (Moghaddam, 1993), views the majority group as a victorious group that has fought and defeated the minority group. However, this model is based on some invalid assumptions. For instance, that the majority group was a 'foreign invader' that has overpowered a weaker group by military force (see Moghaddam, 1993, for an analysis of German unification). Integration could also be seen as 'a company merger' (Moghaddam, 1993, p. 728), in which case, the majority company has taken-over the smaller one. This model is also misleading in that the key motivation for company mergers is economic, the larger company being motivated to take over the assets of the smaller company. It is important to note that the most important, or the initial, motivation for the Cameroon union was not asset acquisition but a concern for national unity and identity. Unfortunately, the former motive now seems to have been at the fore. In the

third place, we can view the relation between two groups from the perspective of 'realistic conflict theory' which focuses on competition between groups that are essentially of equal power (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987, pp. 33-57). But the assumption of equal power in a country like Cameroon with minority and domineering majority linguistic components, among a multiplicity of ethnic polities, is not valid. A more plausible alternative model seems to be the integration of minorities in culturally diverse societies. This model assumes that the groups are culturally different and have minority-majority status. It has been applied to the integration of minorities in North America. The model equally assumes that the minority and majority groups desire to integrate and to do so through peaceful means rather than through war and conquest (Moghaddam, 1993).

Minority Integration into Dominant Cultures

Among the competing models proposed for how minority groups integrate into the dominant society, the most widely studied is that of assimilation. The two major types of assimilation are 'minority-group assimilation' and 'melting-pot assimilation' (Moghaddam & Solliday, 1991). Minority-group assimilation is similar to what, in the U.S. context, Cole and Cole (1954) have termed 'Anglo-conformity', in which minority groups abandon their heritage cultures and take on the culture of the majority group. In the context of Cameroon, this could be termed 'Francophile-conformity', a process in which the Anglophone minority has been placed in an ambivalent situation to abandon its own culture and to begin to take on that of the Francophone majority. Minority-group assimilation is based on support for a development policy that favours those minorities who are best able and most willing to adopt the majority culture (Moghaddam, 1993). In this regard, there are discernible provincial, divisional and individual differences in the extent to which Anglophone Cameroonians have or seem to have accepted or are alleged to have been assimilated by Francophones. 'Minority-group assimilation' is not inevitable, but it is achieved through 'proper' management via social engineering, for example, through 'correct' schooling, hence the seemingly failing attempts to suppress the Anglo-Saxon system of education in the Cameroon. It seems that the backers of minority assimilation in the Cameroon activated hidden agendas to 'Frenchify' British Cameroonians under the assumption that if left to their devices, they would

revert or retreat to their Anglo-Saxon heritage.

In contrast to minority assimilation, melting-pot assimilation is assumed to occur spontaneously, at least in the specific social conditions of the United States. It was perhaps in this light that Turner (1920) approximated the challenging and sometimes life-threatening existence of immigrants in the American West to a form of 'pressure-cooker' melting-pot out of which was expected to emerge a 'new' breed of Americans. Melting-pot assimilation is based on the belief that through a process of social interactions, a 'melting' of knowledge, skills, values, expectations, etc. takes place among the members of diverse cultures, both minority and majority groups, the outcome of which is a new breed of people with a hybrid culture. Perhaps the Cameroon federalists envisaged a gradual loss of the heritage cultures and a gradual evolution of inherited languages into a new generation of people. The process of acculturation among the two different bicultural groups in Cameroon was expected to bring this about. Unfortunately, this expectation is yet to be realized.

Berry (1992) has identified four changes that may occur at the group level as a result of acculturation through culture contact. First, political changes usually bring the minority groups under some degree of control and may involve some loss of autonomy. Second, economic changes may move people away from traditional pursuits towards new forms of employment. Third, cultural changes may include alteration of original linguistic, religious, educational and technical institutions. Fourth, social, relationships become altered, including inter-group and interpersonal relations. At the individual level, some behavioural shifts occur in, values, attitudes, abilities and motives (Berry, 1992). Existing identities and attitudes also change and new ones develop: personal identity and ethnic identity often shift away from those held prior to' contact and reactions about how and whether one should participate during culture contact emerge. Inter-group attitudes and lifestyle preference also change and develop during culture contact and acculturation.

While negative and largely undesirable consequences are not inevitable, and whereas there are also opportunities available during acculturation, it is nevertheless the case that serious problems sometimes appear in relation to acculturation (Berry & Kim, 1988). At the individual level, social and psychological problems referred to as acculturative stress frequently appear (Berry et Al., 1987). The appearance and extent of both behavioural shifts and acculturative stress is affected by the personal characteristics brought to

the acculturative situation, (e.g., the moderating factors that exist prior to acculturation), and by other phenomena that arise during acculturation. Both minority-group culture and the melting-pot versions of assimilation are thought to have influenced attitudes towards national integration in Cameroon. We can better appreciate the power of these interpretations through a consideration of some psycho-social and cultural factors.

The meritocracy ideology and the link between similarity and interpersonal attraction, for instance, are two important psycho-social forces suggesting that under certain conditions assimilation may be the best effective strategy for managing cultural diversity (Moghaddam, 1993). In meritocratic societies, status determinants such as inherited titles and rights should be discarded so that society should be propelled by an aristocracy of 'talent', rather than dictated by the imperatives of birth or other acquired privileges. In other words, the status individuals achieve should be determined by individual characteristics rather than by social criteria or group affiliation. In this light, Moghaddam (1993) is of the view that a meritocratic ideology is only possible if: (a) the unit of social life is the individual, independent of group affiliations; (b) individuals are assumed to be free to select their own destinies; and they can be held personally responsible for their position in the status hierarchy. More importantly, meritocracy involves 'equality of opportunity.' All these factors, rather than personal merit largely determine the advantages or status that accrue to individuals.

The 'similarity-attraction hypothesis', another set of arguments in favour of assimilation, proposes that individuals will be positively biased towards others who are seen as similar to themselves. Such positive dispositions will, it is expected, lead to a more cohesive and peaceful society. These arguments can be grouped in two categories: one presents a case for similarity leading to attraction and the second supports the idea that differences create a potential for conflict. Combined, these perspectives lend rationality to assimilation on the grounds that a more homogeneous society will be a more harmonious one, because its members will be more positively oriented towards one another, thus creating fewer divisions that could lead to conflicts (Moghaddam, 1993). The contact hypothesis and 'melting-pot' assimilation suggest similar processes through which societal harmony could be achieved. Both assume that through social interactions, a sharing of values, attitudes and sentiments occurs (Moghaddam, 1993). Consequently, people become more similar to one another in the way they think and act. The implication is

that supporters of assimilation should work to end ethnic cleavages and increase contact between the members of different cultural groups. However, homogeneity is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in a multi-cultural society like Cameroon.

Shortcomings of minority group assimilation

The failure of assimilation as a policy has been documented. While numerous historical attempts were made to assimilate Canada's other cultures to British norms (Palmer, 1975), by 1956, the Canadian Government acknowledged that "assimilation had not worked anywhere in the contemporary world, and that it was impracticable as a general policy of multiculturalism" (Berry, 1991, p. 17-49). On a smaller scale, experimental work in 'fringe' communities in Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland has shown that "it is never too late to fight for a language and culture." Even where the language appears on the verge of expiry, the passive awareness of it that persists can be fanned to at bring about more active understanding, restoring local pride, improving minority self-image, thereby acting as a positive force for change (Bernard Van Leer Foundation, 1984, p. 12).

Three major shortcomings are associated with assimilation as a process of integration. In the first place, the claim that assimilation is required to create a context in which meritocracy can work can be discounted with the counter-claim that elite do not put meritocracy into practice but simply use the ideology to justify their own superior status. Minority groups often subscribe to this conspiratorial interpretation of the role of meritocracy ideology. The interpretation of meritocracy as a 'mask' that hides the group-based stratification of society underlies, for example, affirmative action programs in the U.S. as well as programs of regional balance in Cameroon. This line of action suggests that members of certain groups or regions have been excluded from the policy of assimilation, and are never given an opportunity to enjoy 'equality of opportunity,' that is, that assimilation has not been put into practice in the manner it has been preached. This implies that minority groups who attempt to assimilate are wasting their energy and resources, because they are attempting to improve their situation through individual action, whereas social stratification has been based on, for example, party affiliation, place of origin or other social criteria, but not personal talent or merit.

The criteria underlying the assumed link between similarity and attraction has not objectively been defined; they are subjectively evaluated and highly similar on several characteristics, but dissimilar on only one 'trivial' characteristic that differentiates and discriminates the two groups. One implication is that no matter how much minorities assimilate and become similar to majority group members, there is always the possibility that some other criterion—an existing one or possibly a newly created one—might emerge, even one that in other contexts would be highly trivial, for inter-group differentiation (Moghaddam, 1986). A third potential Short-coming of assimilation is that a minority group very seldom becomes exactly like the 'model' majority group; at best it becomes only a 'good copy' (Moghaddam & Solliday, 1991). In other terms, the minority group can only assimilate far enough to become 'good copies,' not clones of the majority group.

The Problem with Regionalism and National Integration in Cameroon

Given that a nation is a geo-political unit whose identity mark is communion of thought and feeling and will and action and not just the millions or thousands of people living on the same land or stemming from the same ancestral origin, ethnic and other forms of fragmentation in Africa make it impossible for any African country to achieve nationhood (Fonlon, 1976). Historically, inter-ethnic cleavages in Cameroon have presented the most formidable array of social, political and economic tensions (Levine, 1976), of which the most important, and politically volatile, have been those between minority English-speakers and their domineering French-speaking union partners. Thus, harmonization or integration of Cameroon's cultural pluralism is not an easy task; it is a national challenge. Efforts in this direction have and continue to be made, albeit halfheartedly in favour of Francophones.

The specific intention of the Cameroon experiment in nation-building was to create the first bilingual federation in Africa. Unfortunately, this experiment was prematurely aborted by attempts to push the Southern Cameroon through rapid changes to copy the Francophone majority partner. It is thus more accurate to say that La Republique du Cameroun has absorbed the Southern Cameroon than to describe the change as the 'unification' of two states, equal in status. To cite a few examples, on unification, the franc became legal tender in the two Cameroons and since

1984, the English Common Law System and the French Civil Law System are in use in Cameroon, but there are several instances when persons judged under the English Common Law System have been promptly transferred and tried under the French Civil Law System. Of course, this points to the superiority of the French Civil Law System over the English Common Law System. Investment is lopsided, for instance, in the 1990/91 period, 81.1 % of investment in agriculture went to French Cameroons as against 18.9% for the Southern Cameroons. This is consistent with the practice over the years whereby, most, if not all, economic enterprises of Southern Cameroon origin have progressively been neglected, dismantled or liquidated. The fact that SONARA, the national petroleum oil refinery, is located in Victoria (Southern Cameroons), but pays royalties to the city of Douala (French Cameroons) ties well with this policy. More importantly, hundreds of 'experts' from French Cameroons have moved into virtually all strategic sectors in the Southern Cameroons, obviously to direct and complete the process of annexation.

Culture - Retention: A Policy for Collective Multi-Culturalism

Collective multi-culturalism focuses on groups as cultural units. The philosophical rationale for this is found partly in 'cultural relativism,' the view that one cannot properly comprehend or evaluate phenomena unless from the perspective of the culture in which the phenomena originate (Maghaddam, 1992). In this sense, minority cultures should be strengthened rather than assimilated.

Two plausible psychological assumptions underlie collective multi-culturalism. First, is the view that people are positively motivated to retain their heritage cultures. The second links feeling of security to orientations toward others. This multi-cultural-cultural hypothesis posits that a sense of security within an ethnic group will lead to a more open and acceptable attitude towards outgroup members (Moghaddam, 1993). This hypothesis stands in sharp contrast to the concept of ethnocentrism, which refers to attitudes that assume the in-group culture to be superior, and suggests that feelings of pride and security in the in-group are associated with negative rather than positive views of outgroups. Given the positive value of the culture retention and security assumptions, government policies should endeavour to strengthen a sense of security among ethnic groups through the

support of the retention and development of heritage cultures. Canada's multi-cultural policy, for instance, involves not just support for culture retention but also the sharing of heritage cultures with others. If national unity means anything in Canada, it "must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity" (Palmer, 1975). Out of this personal identity can grow an appreciation and respect for that of others as well a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions with others. In this way, a vigorous policy of multi-culturalism based on fair play for all will help create initial confidence among the constituent ethnic polities. The Government should support and encourage the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society. They should be encouraged to share their cultural values and expression with others, thereby contributing to a richer life for all (Palmer, 1975, cited in Berry, 1992).

Four instructive elements emerge from Canada's policy (see Figure II) of multicultural integration or respectful co-existence. First, through "own group maintenance and development," the policy avoids assimilation by encouraging ethnic groups to maintain and develop themselves as distinctive entities within a larger society. Second, the purpose of fostering "other group acceptance and tolerance" is to increase inter-group harmony and mutual acceptance of all other groups. Third, the element of "inter-group contact and sharing" complements the concept of in-group acceptance and tolerance. Fourth, full participation by groups cannot be achieved if some common means of communication, e.g., language is not learned; thus the "learning of official languages" in Canada is also actively encouraged by this policy.

Conclusion: The Way Forward

Any discussion on regionalism and national integration in Cameroon must acknowledge its full diversity; a unique blend of the constituent ethnic heritage cultures and the acquired British and French legacies as superimposed on an earlier German imprint. This rich cultural diversity must be regarded as a potential national resource that could be harnessed for positive purposes, not a curse or destructive force. The diversity is a mark of national vitality and an integral component of the national patrimony.

Minorities often claim that the rift between ideal and actual is enormous. In fact, since society is far from open and the status of individuals depends more on group membership than individual characteristics, minorities, at

least in Cameroon, have found little, if any, faith in the ideology of equality of opportunity. Thus, different forms of collective multi-culturalism seem to have been adopted by the minorities in an attempt to counter-perceive problems with the way in which integration has proceeded in Cameroon. Most seemed to have accepted collective multi-culturalism as the only feasible alternative for fighting against shortcomings in the way integration is actually put into practice. From this perception perhaps arose the belief that only collective mobilization, as with the Southern Cameroon People's Conference, may change and perhaps improve their situation.

In a recent (1995) classroom assignment carried out by this writer in the Teachers Training College Bambili on principles of indigenous education and their pedagogic implications, inter-ethnic differences emerged. In general, the themes evoked by students from the grasslands were oral literature and the authority of Fons, whereas their forest zone peers stressed traditional rites and the power of secret cults. We need to systematically explore with a view to understanding these and other differences among the constituent ethnic polities in Cameroon and to use them to advantage.

From the backdrop of the foregoing, national policy on multi-culturalism must be characterized by: i) a constitutional recognition of the importance of preserving and enhancing the multi-cultural heritage of Cameroon, especially their bicultural nature; ii) the equality of all Cameroonians must be promoted as a fundamental characteristic of national life.

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Anglophone-Francophone Divide and Political Disintegration In Cameroon: A Psychohistorical Perspective

Bongfen Chem-Langhee

Before 1884, the region which later became the Protectorate of Kamerun comprised a multiplicity of ethnic groups and polities varying in size and administrative system. While the former were not cohesive in character, the latter were highly jealous and protective of their political independence (Chem-Langhee 1990:6), a situation which militated against the political integration of the region. However, the polities which shared a well-defined geographic subregion often interacted and had some kind of diplomatic and trade relations between them, which interaction and relations provided the groundwork for the political and economic integration of the region. For example, there was an intricate system of diplomatic and trade relations between and among the polities of what is referred to nowadays as the “Western Grassfields” (Nkwi 1983:106-13). There was also a relatively well-organized system of long distance trade which linked the Western Grassfields to the Adamawa sub-region to the north and to the forest zone to the south (Chilver 1962:233-58). Both integrative and disintegrative factors thus existed in the region before the Germans carved it out into a political entity with well-defined boundaries in 1884.

But as Chem-Langhee and Njeuma (1980:26) have argued, the Germans did very little to instil in the minds of the inhabitants of Kamerun “the spirit of Kamerunism, the notion of Kamerun citizenship, or the idea of a common political destiny,” since their notion of *schutzgobleb* (protection) did not imply a colonial state as such. However, they provided Kamerun with well-defined boundaries which made it an entity, gave its inhabitants the same system of administration, encouraged and redirected the long distance trade they met in the territory, and encouraged and facilitated by means of a good system of tracks, the movement of peoples from the northern and central areas for work in the plantations they had established in the southern area. While these activities enhanced the prospects of political integration in Kamerun, the Germans failed to carry out the political education that would

have made “Kamerunians” aware of a common political destiny (ibid). Thus, as Arderner (1958:533-59) and Le Vine (1964:passim) have individually argued, there was no such thing as a Kamerun “people” or “nation” before and during the German colonial period, and the leaders who later proclaimed the existence of such a people or nation essentially created myths. What this suggests is that the existence of Kamerun did not provide sufficient grounds for political integration in Cameroon.

The situation was further complicated by the intervention of the French and the British in the affairs of Kamerun. During the First World War, Anglo-French forces jointly defeated those of the Germans in Kamerun in January 1916 and, on 17 March 1916, Brigadier-General Charles M. Dobell proclaimed the partition of the territory into French and British spheres (Elango 1987:9,77). The British sphere consisted of two disjointed, narrow strips of territory in the west stretching from Lake Chad to the Atlantic coast and bordering Nigeria. It comprised about one-fifth of the total area and population of Kamerun. The French sphere consisted of the remaining four-fifths of the territory and population. In 1922, the League of Nations confirmed this division and authorized the British and the French to administer their spheres as separate League of Nations mandates, an arrangement which the United Nations later confirmed as United Nations trust territories (Le Vine 1971 :7),

But there was more to it than the simple partition of the territory into two unequal parts. As Rubin (1971:44-5) has already indicated, the French administered their own sphere, Cameroon, as a distinct political unit and applied their colonial policy to it in very much the same form as in their African colonies. Since this policy was designed to create deep cultural and economic ties with France and its practical application emphasized the inequality between Frenchmen and the people of Cameroon, the latter became self-conscious of their international status and began to demand their independence. They had come to see themselves as a nation, united as such by the common French administration and political system, culture, language and value systems which they shared and which distinguished them from the “Kamerunians” under British administration.

For their part, the British divided their own sphere into two almost equal parts, Northern and Southern Cameroons. The former, larger in population than the latter, was administered as an integral part of the Northern Region of Nigeria. Originally, the latter was administered as part of the southern

provinces of Nigeria and, later, as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria until 1954 when it gained the status of a Quasi-Region of Nigeria. In 1959, it became a full Region of the Federation of Nigeria. These arrangements effectively separated Northern from Southern Cameroons and they developed in different directions administratively. But they experienced and absorbed the same British political, administrative and value systems, culture, way of life and language which distinguished them as a nation different from the 'Camerounians' (Chem-Langhee 1976:1-64). Had these arrangements worked well, they might have endured indefinitely.

But they did not. They completely eclipsed the political identity of Northern and Southern Cameroons or British Cameroons which had melted into the Nigerian personality and resulted in the almost total neglect, by Britain and Nigeria, of the economic, social, cultural and political development of the territory. Eager to reestablish their political identity and secure the economic, social, cultural and political development of their territory, the Western-educated elite and political leaders of Northern and Southern Cameroons revolted against these arrangements. So began the nationalist movements which culminated in separate United Nations plebiscites in which the Northern and Southern Cameroonians were requested in February "1961 to choose becoming independent by joining either Nigeria or Cameroun. The results of the plebiscites, the meaning of the votes notwithstanding, showed that the majority in Northern Cameroons preferred Nigeria while that in Southern Cameroons preferred Cameroun (Chem-Langhee 1990:6-8). Northern Cameroons thus remained an integral part of Nigeria while Southern Cameroons was to reunite with Cameroon to form one state.

The political reunion of Southern Cameroons and Cameroun was however fraught with problems of an integrative nature from the very beginning. First, since the Germans did not make the inhabitants of Kamerun aware of a shared political destiny, the idea of reunion based on a previous Kamerun "nation" or "people", which was used to hoodwink voters to choose Cameroun, was mythical, which is why the partition of Kamerun caused no widespread reaction at the time. As a myth to which very few people attached any importance, it could not be expected to induce or reinforce the political integration of the new union in the face of hard realities.

Second, the parts that were to be reunited were very unequal in size and

population. As already mentioned, Northern and Southern Cameroons constituted only about one-fifth while Cameroun consisted of about four-fifths of all of Kamerun for a ratio of 1:4. With the departure of Northern Cameroons which was larger than Southern Cameroons in population, the gap between the two contracting parties now widened for a ratio of about 1:8. This very wide gap would certainly make Southern Cameroonians or Anglophones, as they came to be known, very sensitive not only to their minority position but also to acts, behaviour and pronouncements of Cameroonians or Francophones, judged or perceived to be prejudicial to their interests and honour. It would also make Francophone political leaders and elite insensitive to the interests and feelings of Anglophones whom they would certainly regard and treat as objects of assimilation into the mainstream of the Cameroon system. A situation like this would hardly make for the political integration of the new union.

Third, those who voted for Cameroun in the Southern Cameroons plebiscite, including their leader, John Ngu Foncha, did so on the understanding that the new union would be a confederation bordering on the Commonwealth formula of an enduring association of likeminded states (Le Vine 1961:4; Chem-Langhee 1990:10-12; Chilver to Chem-Langhee 1979). In their view, this was the best form of state that would preserve their cultural identity and language and ensure the development of Southern Cameroons in all aspects of life. Anything short of this was anathema to them and was sure to force them to want to reconsider their continual existence in the new union. On the other hand, the political leaders and elite of Cameroun were decided on a unitary state in the event of reunion seeing it as the best form of state that would ensure its political integration and unity. But they were prepared to accept a true federation as a stopgap measure to the attainment of their ultimate goal (Ngoh 1990:199; Le Vine 1961:4; Chem-Langhee 1990:8-18). These conflicting views and desires and the determination of each group to effect its ideas could be expected to produce a clash that would, if not contained in time, lead to the political disintegration of the new union based on the lines of the Anglophone-Francophone divide.

The purpose of this paper is to bring together the major Anglophone grievances that have accumulated over the years and Francophone attitude, behaviour and insensitivity that have produced those grievances that are now threatening to break the Cameroon union into its component parts and, through the use of examples, make the Cameroon and other Governments

aware of what would eventually happen if steps are not taken to soothe the Anglophones and to rectify past errors.

In order to grasp the discussion that follows in its true perspective, it is necessary for the reader to bear in mind: that there was no pre-colonial or German-time Kamerun “nation” or “people”; that there has never been a “Cameroon nation”; that there are two very unequally divided cultural and linguistic groups or nations in the state of Cameroon, the Anglophone and Francophone nations; that the Anglophones entered the union on the bases of equality and federation, although they preferred a confederation, in order to ensure the development of their territory in all aspects of life; that Anglophones are very sensitive to their minority position, economic interests and cultural and linguistic identity which they are determined to protect; that the Francophone leaders accepted a federation only as a stopgap measure that would eventually be replaced by a unitary state that would gradually phase out of Cameroon all Anglo-Saxon traces; and that, because of the dominant majority behind it, Francophone leadership is bound to be insensitive to Anglophone grievances, interests and feelings that are slowly leading the Cameroon state towards political disintegration.

Unless otherwise indicated, the discussion that follows is based on hundreds of informal conversations I have held with Anglophones of all walks of life since 1977, on my personal experiences in Cameroon for the last nineteen years, on a careful reading of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly debates conducted soon after the Fumban constitutional conference, and on a careful reading of Cameroon newspapers, such as the *Cameroon Post*, *The Herald* and *the Messenger*, in which Anglophones have been expressing their views since 1990, the year in which the press became partially free for the first time since independence.

Anglophone Grievances

After the plebiscite, and in preparation for the Fumban Constitutional Conference of

July 1961, Southern Cameroons political and traditional leaders, including those who were opposed to reunification, organized a constitutional conference in Bamenda in June 1961. The purpose was to make the Southern Cameroons Government aware of responsible opinion in Southern Cameroons before embarking on final constitutional negotiations with

Cameroun authorities. After a few acrimonious exchanges, the conference settled down to business and produced the “Bamenda All-Party Constitutional Proposals” which provided for a confederation with a ceremonial president who was to be elected for a term of five years renewable only once. These were the ideas which they took to Fumban, despite the fact that a few of them were already aware of the Ahidjo proposals which provided for a strongly centralized federation with an executive president whose powers and term of office were virtually unlimited (Ngho 1990:201-4).

When the Fumban constitutional conference of 17-21 July 1961 opened, Ahidjo made it clear that he and his team had decided on a federation as a compromise between a unitary centralized state, which they desired, and a confederation, which the Southern Cameroonians desired. On the other hand, Foncha, Premier of Southern Cameroons and leader of the Southern Cameroons delegation, with the support of Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, Leader of Opposition in Southern Cameroons, explained that they, the Southern Cameroonians, preferred a confederation which was the best means to preserve the cultural identity and safeguard the interests of the two contracting parties. After these opening speeches, Southern Cameroons delegates were given time to consider the Ahidjo constitutional proposals, which most of them saw for the first time and which were to be exclusively the basis of the deliberations at the conference. They examined those proposals in three sessions on, 17-19 July and produced recommendations that basically sought to put in place a confederation.

When presenting the recommendations to the conference on 21 July, Foncha acknowledged their imperfection but added that they were not far from perfect if Ahidjo and his group seriously considered and accepted them. For his part, Endeley stressed the expertise involved in the recommendations and cautioned that much of the desire of the Southern Cameroonians to unite with the Camerounians would depend on the latter's attitude and manner in which they treated those recommendations. Despite this warning, Ahidjo and his group rejected the most important of those recommendations and accepted only those which did not subtract anything from the strongly centralized federation with a virtually uncontrollable executive president they had decided upon (Ngho 1990:204-9). Worse still, as Foncha revealed in his recent declarations, Ahidjo did not convene the follow-up conference intended to review and adopt the Fumban proposals which, when they

became law, subordinated the English Language to French as one of the two official languages; to the consternation of the Southern Cameroonians.

The refusal by Ahidjo and his team to consider the Bamenda constitutional proposals and to accept the substantive recommendations of the Southern Cameroons delegation at Fumban was, to say the least, greatly resented by that delegation and has never been forgotten by the majority of the Southern Cameroons elite. As far as they were and are still concerned, this was an indication that the dominant Francophone majority would want to impose their will on a helpless minority. It was also an indication, they believed, that the Francophone majority would be insensitive to the wishes, desires and interests of the Anglophone minority. As the first House of Assembly debates after the Fumban conference indicate, they said so then and regarded the Fumban constitution as an unwanted child whose well-being was none of their business. To assign English an inferior place to that of French was psychologically disturbing to them and has been so to the politically-conscious, Western-educated Anglophones. To them, it was and is a symbol of their subordinate status in the state, which is why they have consistently referred to themselves as “second-class citizens.” These attitudes and perceptions of the Southern Cameroonians and the insensitivity of the Camerounians to their feelings and desires, which predated the establishment of the state, boded ill for the political integration of Cameroon. It is thus not unreasonable to argue that, as far as the Anglophone-Francophone divide is concerned, the political disintegration of Cameroon began when the state had not yet been established. That process continued with incredible speed after the state, the Federal Republic of Cameroon, had been established, consisting of the West and East Cameroon states, representing Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon respectively, and the Federal Constitution came into force.

As soon as the Federal Constitution came into force on 1 October 1961, Ahidjo put in place policies intended to produce a unitary system and muzzle out of Cameroon as many traces of Anglo-Saxonism as possible. In 1962, he replaced the West Cameroon pound sterling with the *Communaute Francaise d’Afrique* (CFA) franc of East Cameroon which thus became the only legal tender for the whole country. Likewise, in 1964, he replaced the West Cameroon imperial system of weights and measures with the East Cameroon metric system. By 1965, he had put under federal jurisdiction some of the residual powers the West Cameroon Government had arrogated to itself, a

move which put in question the *raison d'être* of the West Cameroon Government. Between 1961 and 1966, he put in place economic policies that gravely undermined the West Cameroon economy to a point where the pre-1959 conditions had not been restored by 1967 (Ardener 1967:309,314-35). This made the federated state of West Cameroon more and more financially dependent on federal subsidies (*L'Unite*, 1972, No. 537) and thus paved the way for its ultimate liquidation. He also assigned the West Cameroon administrators the task of acting simultaneously as federal administrators and as more and more of their duties came under federal jurisdiction, they became more and more responsible to the Federal rather than to the West Cameroon Government (Ardener 1967: *Passim*). This move gravely undermined the authority of the West Cameroon Government and put in doubt its very existence. His unsuccessful attempts to harmonize the legal and educational systems in favour of the Gallic systems did not go unnoticed. In 1966, he hoodwinked all the political parties in the country into forming a single political party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU), under his leadership. Three years later, he ordered all the trade unions in the country to unite and form a single Federation (*L'Unite*, 1972, No. 541).

These moves, which Ahidjo intended to create a unitary state and reduce Anglo-Saxon traces in Cameroon to their barest minimum in order to ensure national integration, had the opposite effect. To be sure, they led to the creation of a unitary state on 2 June 1972. But a unitary state was and has always been the bogey of the day for Anglophones who saw and continue to see in it the greatest threat to their cultural identity and interests as a minority. These perceptions worked and continue to work in favour of political disintegration in Cameroon. The gradual reduction of Anglo-Saxon traces in Cameroon has also been a bugbear to Anglophones who see in it a determined effort by Francophone leaders to destroy their cultural identity and assimilate them. These perceptions have led some Anglophones to see the creation of a separate, independent state of Southern Cameroons as the best solution to their problem—the preservation of their identity and protection of their interests—while others feel that a return to the federal system in Cameroon would do the job.

It might be argued that Anglophones could not have voted about 99.98 percent in favour of a unitary state in the 1972 referendum if the idea was so galling to them. But it should be remembered that, during the First Republic, the Ahidjo Republic, particularly during the one-party period, the ballot was

far from secret, election results were arranged and known before hand, and it was neither politically wise nor physically safe to hold and express views different from those of the President, let alone oppose in words or deeds any of his plans or action. That is why there was no public debate of the issue when he announced his decision to transform the federation into a unitary state. That is why those who supported the move in public merely mimicked the reasons he advanced in favour of the move. That is why no one publicly opposed the move. That is why the results of the referendum, which some legal minds have recently described as “illegal”, were about 99.98 percent for West Cameroon, 99.99 percent for East Cameroon, and 99.99 percent for the federation as a whole in favour of the unitary state (Chem-Langhee 1990:16-17).

The other factors which work in favour of political disintegration in Cameroon, include the issue of appointments to the cabinet and civil service. Anglophones are not usually placed at the head of very important, sensitive or lucrative positions in the cabinet or civil service, in which they are for the most part assistants. For example, none of them has ever been the President of Cameroon and none of them has ever been Minister of Defence, of External Relations, of Interior, or of National Education. They are usually placed at the head of the least sensitive and least lucrative ministries that have long been stigmatized as “Anglophone ministries”, to underscore their inferior status. When one of them was, in 1992, made Prime Minister for the first time, he was hemmed in with two Francophone Vice-Prime Ministers and a Secretary-General who deal directly with the presidency. His functions are so circumscribed that he is virtually powerless, the first time a prime minister has been so treated. Since this situation prevailed throughout the Ahidjo administration and has persisted with clearer evidence throughout the Biya administration, many Anglophones have come to regard themselves as untrusted, seen as inferior or second-class citizens, a perception which works in favour of political disintegration in Cameroon.

There is also the issue of development. In the view of most Anglophones, the two Anglophone provinces of Cameroon, the North West and South West provinces, have benefited very little from the numerous development projects and social services distributed in the country since reunification in 1961. Their persistent call for the renovation of the Tiko airstrip, for the construction of the Victoria deep seaport and Bamenda Ring Road, and for the creation of a university college of technology or a full

university in Bamenda have met with unfulfilled promises. Instead, more development projects of a similar nature, some of them both very costly and economically unnecessary, and more social services continue to be provided for the other provinces of the country. Witness the construction of a good network of roads in the North, West and Centre Provinces, of the Lagdo Dam in the North Province, and of the very costly and unnecessary Nsimalen International Airport in the Centre Province. Witness the recent announcement that the Nachtigal Dam and the Grande Batanga deep seaport, both in the South Province, will soon be constructed.¹⁰⁴ Witness the recent announcement that a Faculty of Technology will soon be added to the University of Yaounde” in the Centre Province. This lopsided distribution of development projects and social services was glaring enough during the Ahidjo period. But, when it took a turn for the worse and was accompanied by insults and arrogance during the Biya period, most Anglophones became more frustrated and felt more cheated than ever before. The outcome has been, for some, a call for the creation of a separate, independent Southern Cameroons state and, for others, a call for a return to the federal system in Cameroon.

There is also the issue of academic equivalencies. For a very long time, Anglo-Saxon certificates and diplomas, held mainly by Anglophones, were gravely undervalued and belittled by Francophone leaders and elite. Consequently, Anglophones entered the public service at points far below those of Francophones with equivalent qualifications. At the University of Yaounde in particular, this situation hindered and delayed the promotion of Anglophone teachers to higher rank and thus hindered their appointment to

¹⁰⁴ The announcement that the Nachtigal Dam and the Grande Batanga deep seaport would soon be constructed was made only two hours after the end of voting in the March 1992 parliamentary election which the Beti dominated Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) party and government thought they would win with a comfortable majority. Since this announcement did not mention the construction of the Victoria deep seaport and the Bamenda Ring Road, which President Biya promised before the election that he would personally supervise, and since it was made only about two hours after the vote when the results were not yet known and by a Francophone Beti minister from that area, who was known to be working very closely with President Biya at the time. Anglophones note the arrogance and insult involved in it.

policy-making positions at the University and in the public service. Anglophone complaints against the situation were ignored. It was not until the tail-end of the Ahidjo administration that a group of Ph.D. holders, teaching at the University of Yaounde, petitioned the government and made their petition available to some foreign embassies that pressure was put on the government to react positively. Then, the notion of a “terminal degree,” which virtually put the Ph.D. at par with the *Doctorat d'Etat* came into vogue. Before then, however, the damage had been done: Anglophones continue to regard the treatment of their certificates and diplomas as a symbol of their inferior status, a perception that works in favour of political disintegration in Cameroon.

Also working in this direction is an unfortunate incident that occurred at the University of Yaounde about thirteen years ago. At the beginning of the 1983/84 academic year, Francophone students in an accounting course addressed a petition to the Chancellor of the University complaining that their Anglophone teacher did not know the accounting system of the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), and requesting that the course be handed over to a Francophone teacher who knew that system. Their real problem was, however, that the course was taught in English, which made it difficult for them to follow it with ease. In response to the petition, the Chancellor ordered the Dean of the Faculty of Laws and Economic Sciences, against the latter's will and advice, to ask ‘the Anglophone teacher to hand over the course to a Francophone teacher. This decision, which was detrimental to the Anglophone students in the course who were already following many of their courses in French, shocked the Anglophone community at the University and made the Anglophone students more aware than ever before of their plight. When the Anglophone students requested the Chancellor to rescind his decision in vain, they concluded that Francophone leaders were determined to subordinate Anglophone interests to those of Francophones. Today, many of them are among those Anglophones who are in the vanguard of the movement for a separate independent Southern Cameroons state, their new god and only acceptable solution to the problem of their welfare. This of course means political disintegration for Cameroon.

Closely linked to this incident was the problem of the reorganization of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) syllabuses. When the problem of the accounting course was at its height, the Francophone Minister of

National Education made public in October a ministerial decision he had signed on 27 September 1983. This decision reorganized the GCE programs. Whatever advantages and disadvantages the new program might have had, and although it was supported by some respectable, experienced Anglophone teachers at the University, the fact that it resembled Francophone programs at the equivalent levels and emanated from a Francophone minister, made it suspect. Many Anglophones, in the light of past experiences, immediately saw in it the hand of evil, fraught with diabolical plans for their culture and identity. The feeling ran like wildfire that their colonial heritage in Cameroon and thus their cultural identity was in danger. They saw in the move a full-scale attack on their educational system, the very base of the colonial culture they inherited and wished to preserve. In their view, the move was another attempt by Francophone leaders to eliminate all Anglo-Saxon traces and their local accretions from Cameroon and thus destroy Anglophone identity. In the light of these perceptions, Anglophone students at the University of Yaounde, in collaboration with Anglophone secondary school children and Anglophone parents, organized demonstrations against the move in some towns in the two Anglophone provinces of Cameroon and in the city of Yaounde. These demonstrations killed the new program. But the impression that Francophone leaders are determined to destroy Anglophone identity in Cameroon, has remained indelible in most Anglophone minds and continues to work in favour of political disintegration in Cameroon.

The problem of Anglophone educational system resurfaced recently in another guise. In a nutshell, markers of the GCE examinations, all of them Anglophones, were not paid their emoluments for doing the job between 1988 and 1994, while Francophone markers of the equivalent examinations continued to receive their emoluments regularly. During this same period, the GCE examinations leaked once and in another instance, examination questions arrived their destination several hours late. Anglophones in general grumbled over these problems and began to think of ways of solving them. When markers began to feel the pinch of the economic crisis in 1991, they threatened to stop marking the GCE examinations until their emoluments were paid, a threat which some of them put into practice. When salaries were reduced slightly the following year, those who continued to perform the task made the payment of their previous emoluments a condition *sine qua non* for marking the 1992 GCE examinations. The government persuaded them to mark the examinations on the understanding that all their emoluments would

be paid at the end of the exercise. The emoluments were not paid and the markers took note of government's bad faith. In 1993, salaries were reduced drastically and were not even paid on time. The idea of continuing to mark the GCE examinations without emoluments, whereas Francophone markers of equivalent examinations continued to receive their emoluments, was out of the question. Fearful that individual action would not succeed, and in order to protect their interests in general, Anglophone teachers in the country formed a Teachers' Association of Cameroon (TAC), which was either unconsciously or unwittingly legalized by the government. The overwhelming majority of the markers of the GCE examinations are among its membership.

One of the earliest requests TAC made to the government was the creation of a GCE Examinations Board, which they saw as the panacea for all the GCE-connected problems. The Board was to organize, set and mark all Anglophone public examinations and handle their financial aspects. As the Francophone-led and dominated government dragged its feet over the issue, regarding it as an attempt by Anglophones to secede from Cameroon, TAC became suspicious and made the creation of the Board a condition *sine qua non* for marking the 1993 GCE examinations. A war of nerves and words then ensued between TAC and relevant government authorities. The situation soon degenerated to the point where the Francophone Minister of National Education refused to recognize TAC and insinuated that TAC was an illegal organization.

When this approach failed to impress TAC, who had solid Anglophone support behind them, the government embarked on a deceitful move: it created the Board without the usual text of application which would have given it a legal personality and authorized it to function. This trick failed to work as TAC insisted that the text be produced before the commencement of the marking exercise. Caught unawares, the government resorted to measures calculated to bully or cajole the teachers into marking the examination scripts - suspension of some teacher-markers from their official functions, removal of some members of TAC and some like-minded Anglophones from their duty posts, threats of mass dismissal of Anglophone teachers from the public service, direct bribery and corruption, and promises of employment for the thousands of unemployed university graduates. When these measures also failed to produce the desired effect, the government employed a few Francophone and unemployed Anglophone university

graduates to begin marking the scripts. Realizing what harm this new approach would do to the prestige of the GCE examinations; a large number of Anglophones in Yaounde organized a demonstration against it. The demonstrators were so brutalized by the police that one of them permanently lost one of his eyes. But the Anglophones stood their ground. In desperation, the government gave in and signed the required text of application. But not without an insult: it simultaneously announced the creation of the unsolicited Francophone equivalent of the GCE Examinations Board, the Baccalaureate Examinations Board. This announcement once more reminded Anglophones that they were second-class citizens whose interests must be subordinated to those of Francophones. This impression grew stronger in the middle of 1995 when President Biya disbursed a sum of 200,000,000 francs to solve the financial problems of the Francophone Baccalaureate Examinations Board and refused to aid the GCE Examinations Board with a single franc to solve similar problems caused by the insolvency of its bankers. This very recent discrimination against the GCE Examinations Board is currently forcing many Anglophones to question their membership of the Cameroon state.

However, the most important Single factor currently working in favour of the political disintegration of Cameroon is the change in the name of the state. Before reunification, the Anglophone and Francophone sections of Cameroon were officially known as Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon respectively. On the day of reunification, 1 October 1961, Southern Cameroon and the Republic of Cameroon transformed into West and East Cameroon respectively and federated to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Both of them thus suffered modifications in their names, which were neutral enough to command mutual acceptance, and were both united in a new and neutral umbrella name. This move resulted from the outcome of the plebiscite which the United Nations organized and supervised eight months earlier. On 2 June 1972, West and East Cameroon united to form a single unit, the United Republic of Cameroon. This name implied that the two entities had lost their identities but were united in a new neutral name, which indicated that it was a union of separate parts. This move also resulted from the outcome of the referendum which President Ahidjo proposed and organized two weeks earlier. On both occasions, therefore, there was some form of popular consultation, although both consultations have recently been challenged and described as illegal by the Southern Cameroons National Conference (SCNC).

This was not the case with the latest move. On 4 February 1984, President Biya, without warning and without popular consultation, unilaterally changed the name of the country from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon. This new name denied the fact that the state was made up of two distinct entities and resuscitated and thus revived the identity of the former Francophone Republic of Cameroon without mentioning or doing anything for the former Anglophone Southern Cameroons. Indeed, it was an indication that, as far as Biya was concerned, Southern Cameroons and its people had lost their identity which had melted into the personality of the Republic of Cameroon. In other words, they were now an indistinguishable part of the former Republic of Cameroon. This decreed absorption and assimilation of Southern Cameroons and its people left Anglophones with no further illusions about the designs of Francophone leaders on them. As far as they are concerned, Biya had merely carried to its logical conclusion Ahidjo's designs to absorb and assimilate Anglophones into a Francophone state after eliminating all Anglo-Saxon traces from Cameroon. The next step, they believe, would be to decree that French is the only official language of Cameroon. Since February 1984, these views have gained tremendously in strength and have increased Anglophone distrust for Francophone leadership. Some of them have since been calling for a return to the federal system while others desire the creation of a separate, independent Southern Cameroons state as a solution to this problem. The general argument of those who desire the creation of a separate Southern Cameroons state is that the new name of the state signifies the secession of the Republic of Cameroon from the union with Southern Cameroons. They also argue that they had not severed links with Nigeria, with whom they had much in common; to preserve their national identity, just to lose that same identity in the Republic of Cameroon with whom they have very little in common culturally and linguistically.

Conclusion

Before the Germans carved out Kamerun into a political unit, factors which could be exploited to bring about political integration of the region existed. But while the Germans enhanced those factors, they did not carry out the political education necessary to make the inhabitants of Kamerun aware that they now formed a "people" with a common political destiny. By the time

they were defeated in the First World War and ousted from Kamerun, Kamerun was little more than a geographic expression. As far as the all-Kamerun concept was concerned, therefore, the Anglo-French partition of Kamerun meant very little to its inhabitants, at least at the time it took place.

But it was fraught with grave consequence for the future. First, the parts were gravely unequal: the British sphere was barely one-fifth of the whole in size and population while the rest went to France. Second, the British endowed the inhabitants of their own sphere with British traditions, culture and language, while the French endowed theirs with Gallic traditions, culture and language, both of which are diametrically opposed. Third, only less than one half of the British sector in population later joined the French sector to form one state, thereby constituting only one-ninth of the new polity. These factors are definitely not conducive to political integration in Cameroon. This is particularly so because the Anglophone minority jealously guards and does everything possible to protect its identity and interests which it perceives as being threatened by the Francophone majority. On the other hand, the Francophone leaders, because of their dominant majority and role in administration and government, have proved insensitive to Anglophones' fears, identity and interests. Suppressed for long by an oppressive dictatorship, the Anglophones suddenly burst out of the boiling pot as soon as the lid was removed and began making demands that threaten the very existence of Cameroon as a single political entity. This could however be expected since the road to the political disintegration of Cameroon began even before the state was established.

The Cameroon experience is however not unique. During the Congress of Vienna of 1814-15, the victorious Great Powers incorporated Belgium into Holland in order to create a strong buffer state that would hold resurgent France in check. But the Belgians and the Dutch differed in religion, language and economic activities: Belgians were Catholics while the Dutch were Protestants; Belgians spoke Flemish and French while the Dutch spoke Dutch; and, Belgians were mainly manufacturers and industrialists while the Dutch were mainly commercialists and shippers. Though never independent before their union with the Dutch, the Belgians had always jealously guarded their local liberties. Unfortunately for the Belgian-Dutch union, King William I of Holland who ruled the union began to treat the Belgians as a conquered people: he ruled absolutely and decreed regulations that not only worked towards centralization but also favoured Protestantism

and Dutch to the detriment of Catholicism and French. Consequently, the Belgians came to resent what they perceived as an assault on their local liberties and culture. They also came to hate Dutch Protestantism while those of them who spoke French, the Walloons, hated the regulations concerning the use of Dutch. This Belgian discontent prepared the groundwork for an explosion which some incident might bring to the flashpoint. This incident was provided by the July Revolution of 1830 in France which influenced the Belgians to demand Belgian self-government from the Dutch king. But when the king replied by taking up arms against them, they proclaimed their independence and drew up their constitution. At the turn of the year, the Great Powers sanctioned that independence which was recognized by King William I in 1839 (Albrecht-Carrie 1958:33-6; Albrecht-Carrie 1962:48; Palmer 1962:456-57; Schapiro 1953:437).

Nearer home and more recently is the case of Eritrea and Ethiopia. When Italy renounced her claims to its former colonies in 1946, as a result of her defeat in the Second World War, the United Nations charged France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to jointly dispose of Eritrea, Libya and Italian Somaliland. Should they disagree on the matter, it would be returned to the United Nations General Assembly. On 21 November 1949, the General Assembly sent a Commission to Eritrea to assess the wishes of the Eritreans. The Commission eventually reported that the majority of the Eritreans desired a separate, independent sovereign state of Eritrea while a significant minority favoured union with Sudan. On the other hand, Sudan wanted to annex Eritrea while Ethiopia desired union with it. Italy backed the Eritrean majority while Britain was on the side of Ethiopia. On 2 December 1950, the General Assembly adopted a resolution which constituted Eritrea into an autonomous unit to be federated with Ethiopia. Between February 1951 and 10 July 1952, with the aid of a United Nations Commissioner, the Eritreans drew up a constitution, conducted elections to a national assembly, formed a government and thus erected a state of Eritrea which was to federate with Ethiopia. In September 1952, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia approved this state which then federated with Ethiopia to form a federal union of two states. Thereafter, he put in place policies designed to destroy Eritrean identity and transform the federal union into a unitary state. By 1956, the Ethiopian authorities were already *in de facto* control of Eritrean territorial administration. On 14 November 1962, the Ethiopian Parliament voted to

abolish the federal status of Eritrea, which thus became a province of Ethiopia. Since this transformation of the federal union into a unitary state was not in the best interest of Eritreans, their nationals rebelled against it and plunged the state into a civil war which ended in separate independence for Eritrea (Butterworth 1976:68- 9,411).

Examples like these can be multiplied indefinitely. But suffice these to make the point. The difference in religion, language, and economic activities between the Belgians and the Dutch and the determination of the Belgians to protect their local liberties were by their very nature divisive. But they did not by themselves produce the political disintegration of the Belgian-Dutch union: It was only when William I of Holland began to rule the Belgians as a conquered people and to pursue policies designed to produce centralization and minimize Belgian religion, language and love for local liberties and autonomy that those factors came to play their disintegrative role. Likewise, the desire of the majority of the Eritreans to maintain their identity in a separate, independent sovereign state of Eritrea, and of a significant minority of them to join Sudan were by their very nature divisive since the two groups of Eritreans were made part of a state none of them had chosen. However, this situation did not by itself produce the political disintegration of the Eritrean-Ethiopian federal union. It was only when the Ethiopian authorities pursued policies that rapidly transformed the federation into a unitary state, that the Eritreans rose in rebellion which ended in a separate, independent state of Eritrea, thereby dissolving the Eritrean-Ethiopian union. In the same vein, the cultural and linguistic differences between the Anglophones and Francophones, and the determination of Anglophones to protect and maintain their cultural identity, are by their very nature divisive. But they do not by themselves threaten to disintegrate the Southern Cameroons-Cameroun union politically. It is only because Francophone authorities of Cameroon have consistently pursued policies that are detrimental to the interests of Anglophones and give the impression that Francophone leadership is generally distrustful of Anglophones, and because Francophone authorities have taken concrete steps to destroy Anglophone identity, that these factors have come to seriously threaten the political integrity of the Cameroon union.

However, the situation is not yet as hopeless for the Southern Cameroons-Cameroun or Anglophone-Francophone union as it has been for the Belgian-Dutch and Eritrean-Ethiopian unions, if the following steps are

taken. First, the Francophone leadership should become sensitive to Anglophone interests and to their culture and identity, and take concrete steps such as the re-establishment of a federation to demonstrate that sensitivity. Second, that leadership should take concrete steps to demonstrate that they are no longer distrustful of Anglophones by appointing them into sensitive and lucrative positions of trust in the cabinet and administration. Third, they should pay great attention to the economic development of the Anglophone provinces which they should endeavour to bring to the level of the most developed Francophone provinces. Fourth, the name of the state "United Republic of Cameroon," or "Federal Republic of Cameroon" in case of a federation, should be reinstated. Finally, albeit the list is by no means complete, they should avoid provocative statements such as that of the Mayor of Yaounde City, Emah Basile, which referred to Anglophones in 1990 as "enemies in the house," simply because they were clamouring for multipartism and that of a cabinet member and later Sultan of Foumban, Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, who requested Anglophones to leave Cameroon (actually Southern Cameroons) territory and go to Nigeria if they did not want to be Camerounians, simply because they were demanding a return to the federal system in Cameroon. If these recommendations are accepted and implemented without further loss of time, the disintegration of the Cameroon union into two separate states, Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon, might be avoided.

There is the example of Switzerland which is about 65 percent German, 23 percent French and 12 percent Italian, to go by the figures of 1914. Despite these differences in nationality and population size, the Swiss have learnt to live together happily in one state because their government favours none of the nationalities and the three languages are both official and equal (Schapiro 1953:439). If the Cameroon Government, usually led and dominated by Francophones, copy the example of the Swiss Government without much delay, the Southern Cameroon-Cameroun or Anglophone-Francophones union will still have a long lease of life. Otherwise, it will sooner or later share the experience of the Belgian-Dutch and Eritrean-Ethiopian unions. The signs are on the horizon.

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Assessing the Impact of Tribalism and Regionalism on the Development of Cameroon

Tatah H. Mbuy

Probably the most profound archaeological discoveries so far about the origin of the human species remain those of the late Dr Louis Seymour Bazzet Leakey (1903-1972) and his family. In July 1959, Louis and his wife, Mary Leakey, unearthed primitive tools and an almost complete skull in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania with great similarity to that of modern man. And so Africa is to be credited with being the cradle of humankind. (1). Humanity has gone through five successive civilizations. The second took place in Egypt along the banks of the River Nile at the start of the Third Millennium BC. The Pyramids of Egypt, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, are still a puzzle to many architects. We are on the eve of the Third Millennium AD. and Modern Africa has nothing more spectacular to show except her uncomfortable role of a stage buffoon and shameless beggar in a world that counts much on science and technology. It is not for want of brains or raw materials. These are to be found galore!

Africa will go down into history as a land of paradoxes and puzzles. Here beauty and gore exist side by side. The wrong things are done with military accuracy while the pressing needs are forgotten. Here is a continent with virtually everything that human beings need to develop, yet here she is today, the scum of the earth, the laughing stock of civilisation and an insult to her ancestors. When one imagines that not so long ago, China and Japan were considered more primitive than Africa, but that today the West is forced to buy technology from them, then there is sufficient temptation to consult our witch doctor to tell us what is happening to Africa.

Walter Rodney caused a stir when he attempted to show "How Europe underdeveloped Africa"(1972). Many Africans were quick to blame their lack of technological advancement on the West but most of our problems today are of our own making. We seem to suffer from a chronic and bedevilling myopia that will neither learn from history nor read the signs of the time. The new wave of freedom and clamour for democratic change has

resurrected a pair of horrifying twins more dangerous than rattle-snakes in a bedroom. And Africa is foolhardy enough to want to make friends with them! Tribalism and Regionalism are negative contributing factors to the development pattern in Africa.

At least one million Rwandans lost their lives; double that number became refugees in neighbouring countries; survivors were completely traumatized, children left as orphans and the land laid waste, all in the name of love for tribe and ethnic group! That these abominations took place in a country that was nearly 90% Christian gives sufficient reason for anyone of us to re-think the depth of his faith. Worse, to hear that some church leaders took part in these atrocities is enough to turn even the most ardent Christian into an agnostic. But the Rwandan case may just be Act One of a long, repulsive melodrama. We may be sitting on time bombs and dormant volcanoes! This paper is an attempt to diffuse the bombs. Too many Cameroonians today think along tribal and regional lines. A Conference on Regional and National Integration thus seems too ambitious in a country where the concept of national unity, talk less of integration, has still to be well-articulated and understood by all. The former President of Cameroon, late Ahmadou Ahidjo put the problem of Cameroon in this way:

“One of the major problems we have to solve has been and remains the transition from ethnic groups and ethnic affinities to the fatherland and the Cameroonian nation. And the actual situation is not as simple as that. It involves mentalities attached not only to ancestral customs in their varied forms but equally to a diversified heritage handed down to us by erstwhile trusteeship authorities”(2)

In order to appreciate the issues at stake in Cameroon, it seems imperative that we begin with a definition of our major concepts -Tribalism, Regionalism and Development.

Understanding the Concepts

Tribalism

The word derives from ‘tribe’ which refers loosely to a group of people with a common ancestry. ‘Tribalism’ should naturally mean ‘tribal organization, loyalty, culture’ (3). The anthropologist Kottak expresses similar views (1) and many more would accept this for a working definition.

But words have meaning within a context and according to convention. Today, the word 'tribalism' carries a pejorative meaning. It is generally understood as thinking and acting in favour of one's tribe at the expense of some other tribes. Tribalism, so understood presupposes not merely belonging to a particular tribe but using that sense of belonging in order to promote one's interests (5). And so tribalism has come to connote an attitude of partiality and favouritism towards members of one's tribe at the expense of others. One is said to be tribalistic, if he rejects or does not consider better qualified and more competent candidates in favour of those from his tribe. He is blind to the good in others. When a manager of a public institution chooses to employ a personal secretary from his tribe though there is a better qualified person for the post who happens to belong to another tribe, this is called tribalism.

Tribalism also shows itself when a principal of a multi-ethnic institution fills the vacant spaces with children from his/her tribe while denying the better qualified students from other tribes the opportunity they deserve as citizens. Tribalism is when positions in government institutions, departments and organizations; be they political, economic, or even military, are given on tribal grounds, usually in favour of the tribe in power, at the expense of the best qualified persons belonging to other groups. Tribalism is the domination of one group, often unfairly, over other groups (6).

In most of modern Africa, people are very sensitive to one's attitude towards members of his tribe. It has reached a point in some countries where it is sufficient to come from the same tribe with the one in authority. and then either one feels privileged or any action, even accidental, which points to this feeling, is immediately branded as tribalistic. Therefore 'tribalism', read or imagined, is causing serious problems particularly in the area of national development.

Regionalism

A Region is a section of a country, continent or world: Regionalism refers to the deliberate division of a country, continent or world, usually for easy administrative or study purposes. Today, however 'Regionalism' like 'tribalism' has developed a dangerous ring around it. It now refers to favouritism shown to people of a particular region of the same country or continent at the expense of others. In Africa, the word is more applicable

within a country where people of one area or part of the country are treated with more undue attention, favoured and given more opportunities to the near-neglect or exclusion of other areas. As with the case of tribalism, regionalism in most African countries is more than just linguistic quibbles. Imagined or real, the problems created have far-reaching consequences.

Development

We use the word ‘development’ in a very fluid manner. In the minds of many people the word has a positive connotation and denotation. A good number of people will look at structures, institutions, job-opportunities, financial liquidity, scientific and technological advancements, and then say that this is development. Such a view of development looks at production. It is very utilitarian. This was how development was seen in the early years of this century. Perhaps there is still a great dose of that way of thinking today. What is important in such a view is the Gross National Product (GNP). So all that would be needed is for a donor to donate generously and improve the face of the country more school buildings, new airports, universities and buses. These may be signs of development but they are not in themselves what we would consider as development.

Pope Paul VI probably championed the cause of true development in his Encyclical Letter of 14 May 1971, *Populorum Progressio* (the Development of People). According to this letter, development should primarily concern people, not things and structures. Projects and structures are means to development. (7) Nothing will change if we do not develop the people who are meant to man and use the available infrastructure and resources. In the words of the Pope, true development calls for “deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism which will enable modern man to find himself anew by embracing the higher values of love and friendship ... This is what will permit the fullness of authentic development, a development which is, for each and all, the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human” (8). Development must be so well planned that it can fully integrate the human being and not just make him a cog in the machine.

Authentic development is directed to the service of humanity, to the totality of the human person, taking into account his material needs and the requirements of his intellectual, moral and spiritual life. Therefore, no

development is to be an almost mechanical evaluation of economic activity or left to the decision of public authority (9). Development seen in this light does not just happen. It involves meticulous, objective and practical planning. All development must of necessity involve social development and education for critical consciousness. True progress is never planned, much less imposed, from above or outside the people. On the contrary, it entails a positive change in the mentality of the masses, their communal good and participation. Authentic development is first and foremost human development where the individual is helped to grow and become more human in order to better adapt, improve and use the infrastructure at his disposal. To do this, the socio-cultural, political and economic diversity of a country can be a wonderful blessing.

Appreciating the Socio-Cultural, Political, Economic and Religious Diversity of Cameroon

Whatever anyone has to say about Cameroon, her diverse riches are most obvious. The beauty of this melange is more than just poetic or even touristic. There is something unique and strikingly attractive about this country that justifies the references many have made to Cameroon as 'Africa in Miniature'. She seems to represent the splendour and sorrows of the continent in a very peculiar way.

The geographical diversity is evident from the varied features of our fatherland different vegetation belts, undulating landscape, rich agricultural land, lakes the ocean, encroaching desert, fauna and folklore. Ethnically, Cameroon is a mosaic of nearly all African ethnic groups - Bantus, semi-Bantus, Sudanese, Hemites and pygmies. There are at least 250 ethnic groupings in this country and a myriad of tribes, each with its own language or dialect, customs and traditions. These need to be well harnessed.

Culture and traditions will differ of necessity. Therefore we cannot expect homogeneity in Cameroon or even anywhere else! The Bakweris of the Southwest Province will react differently to situations than the Bassa of the Littoral, the Beti of the Centre, the Mankon of the North West, the Bamileke of the West and the Toupouri of the North. One cannot expect the same kind of response even within the same regional or geographical divide. And so the Bamileke, Bakossi, Bayangi, Widikum and Tikar must differ. Even within the same ethnic groups, the differences in tribal sentiments and

reactions are still legitimately felt. That is why the Bamoun, the Wimbun and the Nso, although from the same parents will each portray a unique identity.

In Cameroon as in most of Africa, one's identity is more obvious within the ethnic group, tribe or family. That is the milieu which forms the individual and in which he grows and learns to identify with. This shapes his way of thinking. His father and mother, brothers and sisters, are first and foremost those of his family, tribe and ethnic group in that order of intimacy. The sense of belonging and solidarity is native to Cameroon. Individualism is abhorred and people want to stay together as a family, clan, tribe and ethnic group.

Another beauty of the socio-cultural diversity of Cameroon is the spiritual view of the world. Like most Africans, the Cameroonian spontaneously recognizes the presence of the Divine in his life. In fact, for him, life is meaningless without appeal to God and the Ancestors. Hence in every tribe, there are traditional sacrifices offered or libation poured. The manner of doing this may differ from one tribe to the other, but there is unity in the fact of manifesting faith in the Divine. Religion so permeates all of our traditional life that it inspires most action. The traditional ruler is first and foremost a high priest. He is only respected and his authority accepted because the people see in him a mediator between them and their ancestors. Authority is thus rightly seen as coming from the gods and ancestors. The ruler knows that what is important are his people, not structures and systems.

Human life has a mystery about it. It is sacred. It may be true that in the early days, Fons were buried with innocent people; and that there were human sacrifices in some tribes. These have to be understood within their context and time. Even the bloodshed during tribal wars needs careful study before any judgement, because most Cameroonians shudder with horror to see human blood spilt carelessly. Honour and wealth are not considered here in terms of what a person has or has not. Development is measured here in terms of relationship. A person who cannot relate well with others is considered 'dead'. Life is to be generated, protected and given opportunity to grow to maturity. That is why sterile marriages and childless homes are considered abnormalities. Murder, abortion, torture are modern vices.

The political map of Cameroon reveals a constellation of 117 parties, another sign of the diverse nature of the country. When the bid for multi-party democracy was launched, the response was euphoric and even a party of Ants was born! Our startling variety is appreciable. The economic

landscape is equally as diversified. There are enormous natural and human resources even if they are not tapped. In the field of Religion, beliefs range from African Traditional Religion, through Christianity, Islam and inlets from some Religions and Cults.

The immediate feature of Cameroon that will and must strike any alert visitor is this diverse beauty of the country. President Paul Biya in his Communal Liberalism draws attention to this fact about Cameroon. He writes: "This country more than any other in Africa is a land of socio-historical multiplicity and diversity, the melting pot of various divergent and opposing forces, and of an infinite number of sectarian or even hostile communities which are living on a kind of permanent vigil of arms where ethnogeographical particularisms are strongly evident" (10). This is an honest recognition of inherent regional and tribal tensions.

Regional Tensions in Cameroon

The name of Karl Marx may sound frightful to leaders who are unsure of themselves. But one good side of Marx is his idea of the Dialectic where necessary conflict breeds progress. There are many conflict-situations in Cameroon today. Some are necessary and were to be expected. If well utilized they could prove the best catalyst for the development of this country. Among these are the Anglophone-Francophone Tension; the North West-South West Squabble; the North-South Fracas; the Bamileke and 'Graffi' Problem; and the Bamenda Syndrome.

The Anglophone-Francophone Tension

Modern Cameroon is bi-cultural, a product of English and French colonialism. This is a brutal fact. The two cultures differ very much in approach to reality. The most fundamental principle of existence is that no two things can ever be the same. Unity has never and could never be equated with uniformity. In fact, the best and most refreshing unity is the unity of diversity where the best of each is appreciated and used. Therefore, the logic of existentialism should suggest to all sane Cameroonians that a constitutional recognition of the historical fact of their bi-cultural nature must become praxis if our development means anything to us. That is why more philosophical minds and conscientious observers are at pains trying to

understand why a matter that seems so obvious should be complicated. But modern African politicians have a weirdly suicidal manner of approaching issues that need objective and clinical analysis.

The late Bernard Nso'kika Fonlon pointed out already in 1964 that if the two federated states that have united to make Cameroon are to develop, "we must know our two populations thoroughly-how each has been shaped by the historical forces that have worked upon the years, in other words, the sort of mind it has inherited from the past. This entails careful study, thorough knowledge of the cultures, that have met in this country ... so as to use all that is true and good and beautiful ,in both to produce a new, well orchestrated symphony"(11)

This advice looks so obvious and practical that one would wonder if any statesman could think the contrary. Yet one is horrified to note the kind of gimmick which even the most refined literary scholar will find difficult to describe. The issue at stake here is not a matter of emotions; it is a delicate question of legality to which political prostitutes and sycophants may not be invited: We have here a matter of grave consequence for which only men and women of integrity with less ruffled minds are called to discuss.

The North West-South West Squabble

If the Anglophone problem is today made more complex, it is because of the internal bickering between the South West Elite Association (SWELA) and that of the North West (NOWELA). Those of the South West are bitterly and loudly grumbling that the North West has been stabbing them in the back. They complain that their land is being bought over from the indigenes; posts of responsibility in every bargain which they have entered into as a team are monopolised by the North West and they have been blatantly cheated. So they think they are getting a raw deal from their contract with the North West.

This is an obvious family struggle which some are tactfully exploiting for self aggrandizement and bringing untold pains to the masses who have already been suffering decades of humiliation and neglect Such family jars do not help the development of an area with great but untapped potentials; certainly not when the so-called elite resolve to self-destructive quarrels.

The North-South Fracas

The three Northern Provinces - Adamaoua, North and Far-North - form what some prefer to call the Great North. These have some cultural, religious and ethnic similarities. In these provinces are found some of the country under Ahidjo. Powerful lamidos and scandalously rich Alhadjis, coupled with a militant Islamic culture gave the North an enviable pride of place.

However, since the transfer of power in 1982 to the South under the incumbent Paul Biya, an uneasy relationship exists between the North and the South. The reasons are too clear. A petted child always feels jealous when a new baby is born. Sometimes this could make the former naughty. This is what happened in Cameroon during the abortive coup d'état of 6 April 1984. Since then both sides have become increasingly suspicious of each other. Such a relationship can never breed fertile grounds for development.

The Bamileke and 'Graffi' Problem

The so called Great West is easily the most enterprising part of Cameroon. Consequently, the Bamilekes virtually control the economic power of the country. In a world where the one who pays the piper decides the tune to be played, the presence of the Bamileke anywhere makes others nervous. Some of them have even been driven out of some parts of Cameroon especially after the unfortunate events of the post-Presidential elections of 1992.

Added to their economic prowess, frightful memories of the UPC uprising in the 1960s and its consequent brutal repression with loss of lives and property, lingers on. Neither the Bamilekes nor the others will easily forget the murder of Ernest Ouandie and the treatment of Bishop Albert Ndongmo.

The Bamenda Syndrome

Since the birth of the Social, Democratic Front (SDF) in Ntarikon on the 26 May 1990, Bamenda has become a political hotbed and symbol of opposition to the regime in power. In fact, it reached a point where just anyone, from Bamenda was considered member of the opposition. And so the name 'Bamenda' sets members of government nervous!

Even today, it has almost been tacitly accepted that Bamenda determines the social pressure of the country. So when things happen, it is not uncommon to hear people, ask: 'What has Bamenda said?' This notoriety has cost lives and property. The slow-down in development here especially in road infrastructure and industrial build up, is not unconnected with the distasteful impression of Bamenda.

Tribal Conflicts in Cameroon

When Regionalism is not rocking the peace and unity of the country, tribalism surfaces very strongly. And Cameroon is riddled with sporadic but fatal inter-tribal conflicts. The case of the arab-choa and Kotoko in the Far North and the eternal land disputes in the North West are only the publicized ones that have claimed many human lives and property. But there is an inherent feeling of hatred and tension between many of our tribes.

In the South West Province, the Bakweris think that the Bayangis and the Bakossis are getting far too much; the Bissos and the Bassas in the Littoral could hardly become bed-fellows. In the Centre every arrow is aimed at the Beti, while the Pygmies of the East feel neglected and exploited. In the North West the Balikumbat-Bafanji violence is just cooling off. The Oku and Mbesa people have sucked each other's blood for years. In the Western Province the squabbles are within the same ethnic Bamileke group. It matters here whether one is Bamileke from Bayangam, Mbounda or Dschang. The impact of these conflicts tell on the development pattern of Cameroon.

The Impact

Socio-Political

The re-introduction of multi-party democracy in Cameroon has seen the resurgence of 117 registered political parties. Multi-party democracy as an ideal probably provides the best guarantee for the respect of fundamental human rights. But the experience we have lived in Cameroon since 1990 is far from convincing anyone that we opted for the right form of democracy. There has been horrifying suffering hatred even among members of the same family, calculated and wanton violence, looting, rape and arson, torture and horrendous murders. Perhaps this was to be expected but such occurrences

were new to the average Cameroonian who had lived in peace. Democracy demands a very high moral sense. In a society where there are still serious 'hang-overs' of attitudes and practices from the previous one-party system, we do not expect conversion over-night. The chameleon manner in which we saw responsible men and women switch over from protest marches in the 'streets against the re-introduction of multi-party democracy to almost fetish adoration of the same procedure leaves the political analyst with a tongue-in-cheek. One is equally amused by the shabby under-carpet deal of some of the so-called opposition for change.

For all our noise about multi-party democracy, we have only succeeded in heightening and bringing to light latent tribal, ethnic and regional differences. People are more aware and cling more 'together as tribe, ethnic group and members of the same region. This was never as public and serious before. The country is the poorer for it. Cameroonians, who in true African spirit, felt free everywhere at home, now have to think twice before entering some territories of this country. Even those who were never conscious of it, now have to remember that they are either Anglophones or Francophones; North West or South West; Beti or Bamileke. Some chiefs and fons who are traditionally the high priests, custodians of cultural values and the unifying force in the tribe, are now known to be dividing their subjects because of party affiliation. No doubt we no longer get the blessings of the ancestors as the country bleeds from all over. Ministers and Administrators, known everywhere in more developed environments as servants of the people are here more eager to sing the same chorus than answer the million dollar question which President Paul Biya asked: "What kind of Cameroon do we want to bequeath to our children?" Differences in political opinion could mean death for the weaker one in this country. We still have to learn that people can disagree and still be friends. The basic requirement that we would be the happier if a real opposition is lacking. We see crates as enemies and the real enemies, we embrace.

This is partly what is hindering the development of our young democracy. And we cannot move any further if the same people continue using obsolete ways of dealing with opposition. We are on the eve of the Third Millennium where the force of logic rather than the logic of force is the operative equation. Furthermore, our political parties tend to be built around tribal, ethnic and regional bases. Hence most parties have their stronghold in the tribal, ethnic and regional place of origin of the leader.

Here the people feel it an obligation to support their own son and daughter even is.

Economic

The effects of tribalism and regionalism are more visible in our economic pattern of development. Ahidjo instituted a system of Regional Balance to ensure that all ethnic groups and regions of this country were represented in the state apparatus. This may have had its own merits but it gave room for Cameroonians to expect appointments based on tribal, ethnic and regional consideration. Merit and competence seem to have had no meaning. They still do not!

Since the two leaders of Cameroon have come, one from the North and the other from the South, it is taken for granted that these places have the privilege to receive more attention. The logic is perfect. If yesterday, most of the important and sensitive ministries were given to the North, why not to the South today? Little wonder the North West and others would also want to become princes and princesses! Who does not like to be pampered? One of the evil effects of the 1992 Presidential Elections was the division of the country into the privileged Presidential Majority and the doomed opposition. In fact it would appear that opposition areas are purposefully left out of any huge development projects. This may be a nice political strategy to force people in these areas to re-think their stand. But such policies compromise national development and breed even more and further divisions and conflicts.

Divisions in the Church

If anything of the Rwandan Nightmare shocked people, it was the unfortunate and active involvement of some religious men and women. In Cameroon, the local church cannot say that it has been spared the backlash of tribalism, ethnicity and regionalism. Some years ago, a group of priests of the archdiocese of Douala, submitted a memorandum to the Holy See, protesting what they considered a discriminatory choice of bishops in Cameroon only from among the so-called 'graffi', and 'Anglo-Bamis'. Many devout lay Christians and the rest of the clergy were stupefied that such thinking could come from the ranks of people who should know better.

Almost all right-thinking Cameroonians condemned this memorandum; even some of the signatories on second thought! Today, one wonders whether those priests should not be congratulated for their boldness in openly expressing sentiment that many are now only expressing in bathroom whispers. Christians these days, even devout ones, want 'their own bishops', a phrase which means someone from their own ethnic or tribal origin. They want their 'own priests', their 'own pastors', their 'own catechists'. And so it is no longer the vocation or competence that people seem to want. They look at where one comes from and that is enough to qualify or disqualify a candidate (12). And so the Church is in danger of being split along tribal or regional considerations. This is most regrettable.

Education

What is happening at the Socio-political, economic and religious levels, is equally true in the field of education. People are so obsessed that their worry now is not what quality but what tribe as long as their area has a government school or college with their 'own son or daughter' in-charge. This is probably the greatest blow that Cameroon will have in the next millennium. Education cannot and should not be based on tribal or regional sentiments. The proper formation of the next generation is too divine an obligation for anyone in his right senses to dare to compromise issues. In the educational field, mediocrity simply has no place.

The individual as well as the cumulative effects of tribalism and regionalism on our national development are serious enough to shake us out of slumber. We cannot continue to play the ostrich at this time. Time waits for no one, the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy tells us that "where an area has a history of conflict among religious, linguistic, or racial groups, each concentrated in a particular territory, the members of each will be conscious of themselves as a separate group with a history of supremacy or suffering associated with the territory ... Any such group excluded from political power may be expected to aspire to independence and to want to settle in its territory the terms on which power and prestige are enjoyed."

Why this Resurgence of Tribalism and Regionalism in Cameroon Today

Tribalism and Regionalism were always there, inherent in our culture. But the manner in which they have resurfaced this time has to do with a number of factors, chief among which is the new awareness of the African Identity which has triggered off a resurgence of what was latent in our culture and human nature.

The new awareness of the African Identity

For too long Africa has spoken through the voice of others. She has been on stage for too long and suffered centuries of repression. Now a new crop of Africans have gained a very powerful voice and want to speak loudly and clearly for their parents. Africa no longer wants to be the actor but the playwright. At the dawn of the Third Millennium A.D., Africa has reached a moment in history where she screams wolf at anyone who wants to continue suppressing her. There is an air of liberty which blows over the whole continent. South Africa is under the leadership of an African; most of the continent is at least facially independent and her own children have acquired the skills and power that put their masters over them. Given this atmosphere, there is a tendency in all of Africa to brandish any cultural value that for years remained locked up in the treasure house. Some, when applied in the modern context could prove counterproductive. The awareness of one's identity as a member of this and not that tribe or region is a case in point.

The Cameroonian World-View

It may sound strange to talk about a Cameroonian World-View as if we were dealing with a homogeneous block. However, although differences exist, there is something common in the way Cameroonian tribes and ethnic groups see the world and reality. The world is generally viewed as spiritual. We are thrown into a world made by the divine and we have to function there with others. But the world is compartmentalized. The Tikars of the Bamenda Grassland see each his land as all that the world is about. Even if he is aware that others exist, they exist as strangers. Hence the Nso man will think of Etoudi as part of Nso land which the fon has generously offered to

strangers to build on. Such a concept of the world is common among Cameroonian tribes. Thus each is more aware of its own people and considers others as excluded. This prepares the way for ethnic idolatry.

Being-with-and-for-others

In Cameroon, the concept of an isolated individual who could defy others and live on his own is alien. In almost all our tribes, a man is a man because of others. He cannot afford, therefore, to defy others because he is judged in terms of his relationship. His first and most important relationships are with members of his family, tribe or ethnic group. These are 'brothers' and 'sisters', and the logic here is proverbially put: When your elder brother climbs a palm tree, you are sure to eat the best nuts. So it is simply inconceivable that one in authority will not seek to help those of his own tribe or region. After all, these are his brothers and sisters; and blood, they say, is thicker than water.

Basic human Instinct and 'the will to power'

When the German Philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche taught that there is in each of us the will to power, he strove to say that the ambition to be the main power base is so natural to each of us that anyone would like to be in the vantage position; get his own people where he can easily get prompt and loyal reaction. The closest people to him and those he would know better and by instinct would be men and women of his tribe or region.

The French grammar of operation.

The French policy of assimilation is well-known the world over and particularly in their former colonies. They succeed with admirable tact to make Africans think and behave French. In fact, France should be credited as the one colonial power that has successfully turned seasoned academics over night into choir-boys. Once this happens they are ready to use these people as mercenaries against their own people - divide the people and rule them. And so whatever division will work, no effort will be spared. Who said Utilitarianism and Machiavellianism are not acceptable political stratagems? Talk about development! The French are experts in Regional development.

So Douala, Yaounde, Bafoussam are by Cameroonian standards a sign of good development.

Attempting a Solution

The issues we have raised are too weighty for facile solutions. We cannot pretend that we can give ready-made solutions that will work magic immediately. We are dealing with corrupt human nature which could resent even what is best for it. Furthermore, no human society exists in isolation. Some of the answers may need a complete overhaul of world Politics and International Relations. But such would be a utopia. We however, would like to make three suggestions which we can try out in Cameroon.

Proper education of consciences

The greatest poverty is ignorance and the worst ignorance is one's own ignorance. Every human being has a conscience. It is that part of us which will tell us when we look into our innermost self, that what we are doing is correct or not correct. It is the intellect applied in the moral sphere. Each of us has an intellect and the freedom to choose. Yet given the background within which one grows conscience can either be properly educated or twisted. Once twisted, we see wrong as right and vice versa. Passion can equally play foul with reason and cause even a rare intellectual to err abysmally.

Most of the problems we face in Cameroon today have their cause in a field that falls far beyond the scope of culture, politics and economy. There is a moral corrosion that is slowly but effectively turning us into children of a puff-adder who devour the flesh of their parents. The sooner we realize this, the better for the development of this country. Our educational system or the lack of one, calls for more than just a forum during which papers are presented, albeit well-prepared. In a developing country, educational policy must seek to make the graduate more functional and ready to self-employ his talents. All this will demand a genuine and serious change of mentality.

Thinking about the Next Generation

Anyone who does not think about tomorrow does not deserve to live

today because he could compromise the future for others. To ignore the past and the future is to dance to a suicidal rhythm. We have all lived, seen or heard about the tragedy in Rwanda. That is what tribalism and regionalism can do to a people. We would be fools not to learn from this and avoid the occurrence of such cacophony again. To do this, we must continually remember that if our forebears left us with a legacy, we owe a duty in conscience to leave either a better or at least, what we found, to others coming after us. On this issue, each and every individual living now in this country stands rewarded or condemned by the next generation of Cameroon.

Building on the good African values

In traditional Africa, development was a matter for the whole community. Hence even when an individual was building a house, he did not do it alone. Sharing was another aspect that singled the African out. It was simply unthinkable that one could live in affluence while others suffered around him. Finally, the African feared the wrath of his ancestors and did not just act anyhow. That is why the African was known to be ‘notoriously religious’. Without religion, a human being is capable of any evil. Such a human being is a danger both to himself and to the society he lives in. We are living in a Cameroon where people live to mock at anything religious God deserves more than just an apology. The destruction of any civilisation in history always began with their neglect of the gods. Is this any omen for us?

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Equilibre Régional, Replis Identitaires Et Fragilisation Croissante De L'intérêt National: Vers Un Effet "Boomerang" De La Politique Des Quotas Au Cameroun

Zambo Belinga Joseph-Marle

Introduction

La problématique de l'intégration nationale est certainement au Cameroun l'une des questions les plus préoccupantes et délicates qui s'est posée et se pose même encore, au-delà d'une quelconque quiétude qu'afficheraient les gouvernants dans leurs discours officiels.

Le caractère préoccupant du débat sur l'intégration nationale au Cameroun trouve son fondement dans la configuration sociopolitique et donc culturelle de ce pays. Le Cameroun est en effet composé d'une mosaïque de peuples à des manières de vivre différentes. C'est cette réalité qui lui a valu le qualificatif d' "Afrique en miniature". Cette extrême hétérogénéité socioculturelle pose un problème fondamental: comment procéder pour mettre sur pied un modèle de société au sein de laquelle cette hétérogénéité soit quotidiennement mue par une conscience commune, une communauté de dessein afin de pallier l'éventualité (plus plausible) d'une manifestation plus accrue des intérêts identitaires.

Le caractère délicat du débat sur l'intégration nationale quant à lui tient au fait qu'une option prise par les gouvernants n'est pas toujours à l'abri d'éventuelles récriminations générées par des sentiments de frustrations plus ou moins justifiées dus à l'accès (facile ou non) des localités à ce qui est désormais considéré aujourd'hui comme le "gâteau national". Jean Pierre FOGUI ne se trompe donc pas lorsqu'il affirme dans son ouvrage que 'Le Cameroun est l'un des pays les plus difficiles à gouverner en Afrique Noire'.

Pourtant, nonobstant l'extrême complexité de la société camerounaise, les gouvernants se devaient bien d'opérer un choix, mieux de mettre sur pied un modèle de développement qui tienne compte de cette configuration. Aussi, optèrent-ils pour une politique d'équilibre régional qui peut s'entendre

comme étant une politique de développement économique, social et culturel qui prône la participation et la représentation effective de toutes les régions du Cameroun au sein des structures de l'état.

Mais l'application de cette politique a-t-elle véritablement conduit à l'intégration nationale et à l'unité du pays ou au contraire, n'a-t-elle pas favorisé l'accentuation de l'instinct tribal chez les camerounais? Quelle lecture peut-on faire aujourd'hui, au moment où l'on parle de régionalisme et dans un contexte où les revendications sécessionnistes de certaines communautés camerounaises" se font de plus en plus à ciel découvert, des trois décennies de pratique effective de l'équilibre régional? Voilà quelques pistes d'interrogation qui sous-tendent la réflexion que nous nous proposons d'esquisser au cours de ce travail.

L'analyse de la politique des quotas mise sur pied au Cameroun dans le souci officiel d'asseoir un développement équilibré de toutes les régions du pays en vue de promouvoir l'intégration nationale, que nous voulons entreprendre ici s'ordonnera autour de la thèse selon laquelle l'adoption et conséquemment l'application de la politique des quotas comme mode de promotion de l'intégration et de l'unité au Cameroun s'est soldée par un échec. La diversité des origines des élites administrative, politique, militaire, intellectuelle etc. que cette politique garantissait n'a pas pu donner lieu au niveau de l'Etat, à l'enracinement d'un sentiment de communauté de dessein parmi celles-ci. IL y a donc eu, non disparition de l'attachement à la tribu, localité ou région d'origine, mais plutôt pérennisation de ce sentiment. Il s'agit ainsi d'une saisie des dysfonctions nées de l'application de la politique de l'équilibre régional au Cameroun, c'est-à-dire des débordements qu'a entraînés l'application de cette politique.

Pour mieux cerner notre cheminement, il nous semble opportun de préciser le champ théorique sous le prisme duquel nous avons placé notre analyse. Nous pensons en effet que la nouvelle sociologie critique nous sera d'un apport considérable au cours de notre analyse de la politique des quotas telle que pratiquée au Cameroun depuis l'accession de ce pays à la souveraineté internationale. Elle nous permet en effet d'éviter de nous contenter des réalités qui tombent directement sous les sens. Car elle recommande au sociologue de considérer la réalité sociale comme une réalité à double "paliers": un "pailler" "officiel" qui reflète la manière dont la société se conçoit elle-même et un 'pailler' "officieux" qui représente "la nature vraie" de la société. Ainsi, " ... la société "officielle" ne coïncide pas avec la société réelle

(...), *elle se trouve plus ou moins en retard par rapport à celle-ci*³. Le sociologue doit donc rechercher des révélateurs, ce qui lui permettra d'effectuer une lecture démystifiée de l'actuel. Ziegler ne dit pas le contraire lorsqu'il soutient:

Mais tout système d'auto-interprétation, tout système culturel, toute idéologie, toute religion masque, cache, ment et révèle tout à la fois; ce qui est le plus cache est plus véridique. Ce qui est à montrer est à expliquer par ce qui ne se montre pas. J'ai dit que la sociologie tentait de comprendre la production de la société par elle-même. Il faut être plus précis: c'est ce qui n'apparaît pas dans la production de la société par elle-même que la sociologie doit débusquer, démasquer, mettre au jour⁴.

Notre démarche au cours de l'analyse de la politique de l'équilibre régional pratiquée au Cameroun que nous voulons entreprendre ici s'inspire de ce modèle théorique. Elle comporte deux principales parties. Dans un premier temps, nous nous emploierons à présenter la réalité socio-historique qui a servi de source de légitimation de l'option prise par les gouvernants; dans un second mouvement, nous saisirons le phénomène des quotas au ras du sol.

Quelques Préalables Historiques A La Saisie Du Phénomène De L'équilibre Régional Au Cameroun

L'objet de cette partie est de restituer la genèse de la politique de l'équilibre régional dans son contexte historique afin de mieux la cerner.

Restituer La Genèse Du Phénomène Dans Son Contexte Historique: Un Préalable A L'analyse De L'équilibre Régional Au Cameroun

Au moment où il accède à la souveraineté internationale, l'Etat camerounais est largement tributaire de l'héritage colonial. Si l'un des aspects positifs des passages du colonisateur et des missionnaires occidentaux en Afrique en général et au Cameroun en particulier est l'œuvre de scolarisation plus ou moins importante des populations autochtones qu'ils ont réalisée dans les colonies, il faut reconnaître qu'au Cameroun, la scolarisation s'est faite de façon déséquilibrée à l'intérieur du triangle national. En effet, certaines régions, compte tenu de leur situation d'éloignement par rapport à

la cote, zone de débarquement des missionnaires et du colonisateur, n'ont pas eu facilement accès à la scolarisation. Mais à cet argument historique, il faut ajouter un autre sociologique.

L'examen de l'histoire de l'implantation de l'école au Cameroun montre que l'éloignement d'une région par rapport à la cote ne saurait à lui seul, justifier le retard qu'ont connu et connaissent même encore aujourd'hui certaines provinces en matière de taux de scolarisation. La présence des "zones sous scolarisées" ou "régions moins scolarisées" au Cameroun aujourd'hui trouve également son fondement dans les mentalités des peuples desdites localités. Nous tenterons donc, dans cette partie d'examiner les deux arguments.

L'histoire de l'école au Cameroun est intimement liée à Celle de l'implantation des églises dans ce même territoire. En effet, dès leur arrivée (située au cours de la période 1844-1884)⁵, les premiers missionnaires s'investirent aussitôt dans le processus d'encadrement des populations autochtones. C'est en effet, au cours de cette période que les premières écoles furent créées au Cameroun, bien avant le début de l'épisode "de la colonisation (qui commença en 1884 avec les allemands). La première école fut ainsi ouverte en 1844 à Bimbia près de la ville de Limbe actuelle, dans le département du Fako par le Pasteur Joseph Merrick de la Baptist Missionary Society⁶ et était dirigée par Richard Ngomba Cooper⁷. La deuxième école fut fondée en 1845 à Bethel (Douala) par le Pasteur Alfred Saker. Arrive à Douala le 10 Juin 1845, Saker y a prêché pour la première fois le dimanche 22 Juin et a ouvert une école le lundi 23 Juin 1845 ou se présentèrent 20 enfants⁸. En 1849, sept écoles baptistes sont implantées, à Bimbia (une) à Victoria (une) et à Douala (cinq).⁹

Cette présentation montre, s'on était encore besoin que la cote, bien avant l'arrivée du colonisateur allemand, connaissait un début de scolarisation. Cette tendance va se renforcer durant la colonisation allemande, laquelle fut caractérisée par le renforcement de la présence des missionnaires dans le secteur educative¹⁰. Quatre sociétés de missions participaient à cette entreprise durant cette période: la mission de Bale, les presbytériens américains, les baptistes allemands et les pallotins allemands. Cette dernière société menait le peloton dans l'œuvre de scolarisation durant la colonisation allemande avec en 1913, 12.461 élèves dont 3.505 réussites à

l'examen de fin de cycle". Sa scolarisation concerna surtout les populations du littoral, du Centre, du Sud et de l'Ouest.

A la fin du protectorat allemand (1914), les diverses missions religieuses ont scolarisé plus de trente mille élèves¹². Cette scolarisation était inégalement vécue à l'intérieur du territoire camerounais. Mbala Owono nous en donne une idée assez claire lorsqu'il affirme que " *sous le protectorat allemand, la scolarisation, limitée pratiquement au sud Cameroun, est à la fois rapide et presque totalement l'œuvre des missionnaires*"¹³. L'avance que prirent les populations du sud Cameroun (c'est-à-dire de la cote) en matière de scolarisation durant la période précoloniale et la période coloniale allemande se maintiendra durant la double colonisation franco-britannique.

En guise d'exemple: tandis qu'en 1939¹⁴, le premier établissement secondaire (le collège Saint- Joseph) ouvrait ses portes à Sasse (localité située à 7 km de Buea et ayant abrité 95 ans plus tôt la première école à être implantée au Cameroun en 1844), la première école primaire du Margui-Wandala quant à elle n'ouvrira ses portes à Mokolo que le premier mai 1934, donc 90 ans après la création de la première école du Cameroun. Ces autres exemples nous permettront de mettre davantage en exergue l'écart entre le Sud et le Nord dans le domaine.

En 1955 en effet, on comptait

8.000 élèves au Nord-Cameroun contre 244.000 au Sud. Seuls 6% d'enfants d'âge scolaire allaient à l'école, contre 85% dans le Sud. Entre 1965 et 1970, le taux de scolarisation des enfants âgés de 6 à 13 ans est passé de 51 à 61 % pour tout le pays alors qu'au Nord, il passait de 19 à 22%. Sur 4.500 Etudiants inscrits à l'université de Yaoundé en 1972, 30 seulement étaient originaires du Nord¹⁵.

En 1982, l'ancien président Ahidjo évoquait encore ces disparités dans le domaine scolaire (aussi bien primaire, secondaire que supérieur) et confiait à Henri Bandolo que, du point de vue de la scolarisation, le Nord avait, dans le primaire, un taux de 31 % alors que celui du centre-sud était de 94% et l'Ouest 90%. A l'université, toutes facultés confondues, il y avait 1% des ressortissants du Nord et 1% de ceux de l'Est¹⁶.

L'argumentation historico-géographique (ouverture du sud sur l'océan atlantique ayant privilégié les populations de cette région à nouer des relations étroites avec les européens permettant ainsi un développement plus

rapide de cette partie du territoire) ne saurait pourtant à elle seule justifier les écarts entre le nord et le sud, dans le domaine scolaire que nous venons de mettre en exergue ici. Il faudrait également tourner le regard du côté culturel. En effet, un regard sociologique porte vers la culture du Nord Cameroun par exemple laisse apparaître des pesanteurs au niveau des mentalités des peuples de cette région, pesanteurs qui ont considérablement retardé et obstrué le processus de l'implantation de l'école occidentale dans la dite région. Ainsi, malgré la création de la première école du Margui-Wandala à Mokolo le 1^{er} Mai 1934, les populations affichaient une résistance à y inscrire leurs enfants. Il a fallu recourir à la contrainte pour y parvenir. Aussi, les autorités militaires furent-elles nobélisées à cette fin. Jean Yves Martin, citant le maître en place en 1934 à l'école du Margui-Wandala rapporte:

Capitaine Lefson, seconde par le Sous-lieutenant David, a dû demander aux chefs (Kirdis) de contraindre les parents d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école, et finalement, on a obtenu à peine une quarantaine d'enfants après dix jours de discussion¹⁷.

Cette contrainte qu'exerçaient les autorités militaires de l'ère coloniale sur les chefs traditionnels du Nord pour les amener à convaincre les populations dont ils avaient la charge de diriger, dans le but d'obtenir l'inscription de leurs enfants aux écoles ainsi créées, persistera après l'accession du Cameroun à l'indépendance. Cette fois par le truchement des autorités administratives ainsi qu'en témoignent les lettres qu'elles adressaient aux Lamibe¹⁸ à ce sujet:

J'ai l'honneur de vous demander de bien vouloir intervenir énergiquement auprès des populations Nassarac et des villages environnants afin qu'elles envoient leurs enfants à l'école publique de Nassarac, car jusqu'à ce jour, aucun recrutement des nouveaux élèves n'a été enregistré dans cet établissement. Vous me rendrez personnellement compte des difficultés que vous rencontrerez dans l'exécution de cette tâche,

Ou encore:

Je viens d'être saisi par M. l'Inspecteur départementale la mauvaise fréquentation qu'il a été amené à constater lors de son passage à l'école

rurale de Ouro Kianda. Je tiens à attirer particulièrement votre attention sur cet état des choses qui est susceptible d'engendrer la fermeture de cet établissement. Pour éviter que ce responsable soit amené à prendre une telle décision, j'ai l'honneur de vous demander de prendre toutes vos dispositions en vue de procéder au recrutement des nouveaux élèves et d'assurer la fréquentation régulière des enfants ¹⁹.

De cette rapide présentation de la carte scolaire du Cameroun, il appert qu'au moment où ce territoire accédait à l'Indépendance, il connaissait d'énormes disparités dans le domaine scolaire, lesquelles se répercutaient sur le développement économique, social et culturel. Aussi les premiers dirigeants durent-ils se prononcer sur une question fondamentale à l'époque, à savoir comment gouverner ce jeune état indépendant dont l'extrême hétérogénéité socio-culturelle²⁰ se complique par une présence accrue des disparités entre les régions. Cette question apparaissait d'autant plus cruciale que cette période de l'histoire politique et sociale du Cameroun était largement marquée du sceau du désordre et des troubles nés des frustrations orchestrées par une Indépendance dont le caractère légitime n'était pas toujours reconnu par la plupart des fractions ayant composé le mouvement nationaliste qui a enclenché ces revendications²¹. Aussi fallait-il pour les nouveaux dirigeants du Cameroun non seulement éviter de donner la matière à une opposition particulièrement proluxe et acerbe à leur égard en optant pour un modèle de société qui prêterait facilement le flanc à la critique, mais surtout concevoir un type de gouvernabilité tenant compte de la diversité sociale au Cameroun et des inégalités historiques accompagnant cette diversité. Les premiers dirigeants optèrent ainsi pour l'équilibre régional autrement appelé planification.

Il s'agit d'une politique qui est sous-tendue officiellement par le souci de promouvoir un développement équilibré de toutes les régions du territoire camerounais afin d'éviter, autant que faire se peut, d'aboutir à la domination de certaines régions sur d'autres et de contribuer ainsi à l'entreprise de construction de la nation. Le premier Président du Cameroun soutiendra à ce sujet:

Or nous pensons – je continue à penser qu'un pays qui s'édifie en tant que nation doit autant que possible avoir une Administration, une Armée et une Police qui soient l'image de la nation. Ça veut dire que toutes les

provinces, toutes les régions du pays, autant que possible, doivent être représentées dans les corps de l'Etat, dans l'Armée dans la Police. Et nous nous trouvons maintenant devant cette situation où une province comme celle du Nord - et au départ comme la province de l'Est ou le Nord-Ouest étaient très en retard au point de vue de l'enseignement. Nous avons estimé qu'il fallait, par certaines mesures transitoires - et donc temporaires - essayer, d'associer dans la mesure du possible, les ressortissants de ces provinces à l'administration du pays à la défense du pays etc.

Pour l'ancien Président Ahidjo ces mesures s'imposaient:

... ce que nous faisons je crois qu'il est indispensable pour le pays: Voilà la réalité, car en tant que responsable suprême, j'ai fait prendre ces décisions dans l'intérêt supérieur du pays. Ce n'est pas dans l'intérêt de telle ou telle région. En effet, comment peut-on, dans un pays neuf qui construit son unité comme le notre, et dans un domaine où l'administration ou le gouvernement est directement responsable, comment peut-on laisser s'instaurer la loi de la jungle qui veut que les plus forts écrasent complètement les plus petits? ²².

Aussi, par décret No 82-407 du 07 septembre 1982 (modifiant et complétant certaines dispositions du décret No 75-496 du 03 Juillet 1975 fixant le régime général des concours administratifs), l'ancien Président Ahidjo avait-il légalisé la pratique des quotas au Cameroun.

De la lecture de ce décret, il ressort (article 56 nouveau, alinéa 1) que

Dans le cadre de l'arrêté portant ouverture de chaque concours d'entrée dans les différentes catégories de la fonction publique, le ministre chargé de la fonction publique procède à une répartition des places entre candidats, suivant leur province d'origine ...

L'alinéa 3 quant à lui précise que

Le ministre chargé de la fonction publique fixe par un texte particulier les quotas de places réservées aux candidats de chaque province, compte

tenu de l'importance démographique et du taux de scolarisation de leur province d'origine.

L'alinéa 4 définit le concept de province d'origine:

considérée comme province d'origine d'un candidat, la province dont ses parents égitimes sont originaires.

Le 4 Octobre 1982, un arrêté d'application de ce secret fut pris par le ministre de la fonction publique (No 010467/MFP/DC). Son article 2 répartissait le nombre de places dues à chaque province dans les concours administratifs compte tenu de l'importance démographique

et du taux de scolarisation, ainsi qu'il suit:

- _ province du Centre-sud 19%
- _ Province de l'Est 04%
- _ Province du Littoral 12%
- _ Province du Nord 30%
- _ Province du Nord-ouest 12%
- _ Province de l'Ouest 13%
- _ Province du Sud-ouest 08%
- _ Anciens militaires 02%.

Ces deux textes ont ainsi légalisé une pratique qui avait cours au Cameroun depuis l'indépendance. Mais il faut s'empresse de préciser que les concours administratifs n'étaient pas les seuls lieux où cette pratique avait cours. Il s'agit en réalité d'une véritable méthode de gouvernement qui touche pratiquement toutes les sphères de la vie étatique au Cameroun. En témoigne le dernier renouvellement²³ des membres du comité central du Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (Parti au pouvoir) lequel a été pourtant réalisé par le biais d'élections (si l'on s'en tient à la logique du parti). En effet, les 50 membres ayant été "élus" ne semblent logiquement avoir été retenus que sur une base de représentation tribale. L'articulation de la liste établie dans l'ordre alphabétique des départements laisse observer que chaque partant a été remplacé par un ressortissant du même département que lui. De même, les nominations à des postes de responsabilités dans les secteurs public et parapublic, dans le gouvernement, les agréments et octroi de bourse d'étude, les autorisations diverses etc. se font sur la base de ce principe. Aussi, certaines ethnies n'hésitent-elles pas à

recenser et à tenir régulièrement un fichier de leurs ressortissants, et élaborer des stratégies constantes pour les placer dans autant de postes administratifs que possible. Des lors, la qualité du “fruit” qu’a produit la politique de l’équilibre régional pratique au Cameroun apparaît clairement.

L’Equilibre Régional au Ras du Sol

Peut-on affirmer aujourd’hui que la pratique de l’équilibre régional a permis de créer en chaque camerounais les “conditions d’une conscience nationale”, *“de manière si profonde que l’attachement instinctif aux valeurs et intérêts tribaux ou régionalistes ne puissent plus la perturber.”*²⁴

En d’autres termes, la pratique de l’équilibre régional au Cameroun a-t-elle conduit au “dépérissement progressif du sectarisme” et crée des “espaces sociaux plus intégrés”?²⁵ Après s’être employé pendant plus de 30 ans à créer l’administration camerounaise, l’armée ou la police camerounaise a l’image des diversités et différences qui sont la particularité du Cameroun, a-t-on abouti au renforcement de l’unité?

Telles sont les questions auxquelles cette partie tente de répondre, Notre ambition consiste à mettre en exergue la réalité selon laquelle la politique de l’équilibre régional appliquée au Cameroun a plutôt instaure un type de gouvernabilité qui exclut chez les gouvernants, le souci de l’intérêt général, empêchant ainsi ces derniers d’appréhender le Cameroun comme une globalité.

a) Les incongruités d’un présupposé idéologique.

L’analyse de l’argumentation de l’ancien Président AHIDJO sur le bien-fondé de la politique d’équilibre régional ci-dessus invoquée, argumentation a la faveur de laquelle cette pratique fut adoptée au Cameroun, laisse apparaître un présupposé ayant sous-tendu la conception de ladite politique. En effet, pour AHIDJO, l’équilibre régional s’imposait aux gouvernants du jeune Etat indépendant dans la mesure où il se présentait comme le moyen le plus sur, à l’aube de l’indépendance, de pallier les disparités régionales héritées de la colonisation et de permettre ainsi une reproduction de la diversité socioculturelle dans les structures de l’Etat.

Ainsi, tout se passait comme si les camerounais de l’époque (et marne ceux d’aujourd’hui) étaient incapables de penser leur pays en terme de globalité. En d’autres termes, l’argument de l’ancien Président AHIDJO ramène ou réduit la vision de chaque camerounais à sa totalité, région, ethnie

etc. C'est pour cette raison que la construction d'une structure comme l'Etat, lequel transcende les identités, doit nécessairement intégrer toutes, ou tout au moins la majorité des composantes de L'espace socioculturel national si elle a L'ambition d'obtenir l'adhésion de celui-ci.

Pourtant, des faits significatifs empruntés de L'histoire politique du Cameroun avant son accession à l'indépendance nous exigent de rejuger la crédibilité du présupposé de L'ancien Président AHIDJO. En effet, il ressort de la lecture de L'ouvrage de Richard Joseph que la branche radicale du mouvement nationaliste représentée par l'Union des Populations du Cameroun (U.P.C.) avait fondamentalement un projet ou une vision nationale de la société camerounaise, durant la période des revendications en vue de l'indépendance²⁶.

Un autre exemple nous permettant de voir davantage mieux dans cette existence effective d'une vision globalisante de la société camerounaise par ses acteurs durant la période des revendications pour L'indépendance est le mot "KIRAVI (I)". S'il est vrai qu'il s'agissait d'abord d'un yin imports au Cameroun, il faut reconnaître que l'imaginaire collectif a tout fait, a cette époque, de récupérer ce nom-pour lui assigner un autre sens, lequel traduisait mieux les préoccupations des populations qui en faisaient usage. Littéralement, l'expression se traduisait ainsi: "*Le Kamerun International Refuse l'Autonomie et Revendique L'Indépendance*". Parfois, la lettre "I" était doublée à la fin. Ainsi, au lieu de s'arrêter a indépendance, on ajoutait Le qualificatif immédiate". Cet exemple prouve qu'il est complètement caricatural de penser que les camerounais sont a priori tournés vers leurs tribus.

Une autre incongruité consiste à penser qu'il suffit de transposer et garantir la diversité socioculturelle camerounaise au niveau des structures de l'Etat pour obtenir L'unité nationale. C'est dans cette perspective que la gouvernance d'AHIDJO s'est entreprise à réaliser une assimilation réciproque des différents segments des élites traditionnelles, coloniale et postcoloniale". Mais cela revient à penser que Le sentiment de communauté de dessein naît de la seule proximité des espaces de vie des acteurs sociaux. Car, en cherchant à rapprocher des sujets d'origines diverses a l'intérieur d'une même entité dans L'intention d'obtenir leur collusion en vue de faire cause commune, tout se passe comme si ce rapprochement garantissait du coup a lui seul, le succès de l'opération.

Pourtant, une telle vision n'est qu'un leurre car, dans l'affirmative, on serait également amené à soutenir le point de vue selon lequel, les

fonctionnaires de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, qui viennent de tous les pays membres, oublieraient ou perdraient, par le simple fait qu'ils travaillent tous au sein et pour le compte d'une même structure, leur nationalité d'origine. Ce qui nous semble une pure vue de l'esprit.

La diversification des élites administrative, politique, militaire, etc. a l'intérieur de l'appareil étatique dont le dessein officiel était la construction de l'unité nationale et conséquemment le renforcement de la paix et de la cohésion des différentes entités régionales par le biais de la suppression ou tout au moins la réduction des disparités qui caractérisent les régions, grâce à la participation de tous au partage du gâteau national a, malheureusement, tout fait de "transporter" et transposer la réalité des identités locales au niveau global que se veut être l'Etat.

L'effectivité de ce phénomène de positionnement des localités au niveau de l'Etat s'observe facilement au travers de la prolifération des associations d'élites de telle ou telle localité du pays. Nonobstant l'interdiction de regroupements à base tribale par la loi de 1967 sur la liberté d'association (loi n°67/LF/19 du 12 Juin 1967, article 4), les Camerounais se sont toujours entrepris à créer de telles entités au sommet desquelles on rencontre généralement des personnalités des régions concernées exerçant de hautes responsabilités dans une structure de l'Etat. (voici quelques exemples en 1992: Association des élites du Ntem, Président Oyono Ferdinand (Ancien Ministre de l'Urbanisme et de L'Habitant, aujourd'hui Ministre des Relations Extérieures); Association des ressortissants du Nyong et Mfoumou, Président Biwole Gilbert (Directeur du FEICOM); Association pour le développement de la Mefou, Président Mbede Joseph (Ministre de la Santé). Ces associations qui affirment s'être constituées dans le seul souci de permettre aux ressortissants d'une localité X exerçant dans une localité Y autre que la leur (c'est-à-dire en réalité leur province ou département d'origine) de se connaître individuellement et de participer au développement de leur village, ont parfois une assise nationale avec un bureau national siégeant à Yaoundé et des "antennes" provinciales et départementales.

Il faut tout de suite remarquer que la vision que ces associations d'élites se font du processus du développement national cache peu leurs véritables préoccupations. En effet, le fait pour les élites de s'employer d'une part à rechercher les leurs, des lors qu'elles se retrouvent dans une localité autre que la leur et d'autre part qu'elles abordent la question du développement en termes de partition est une preuve suffisante qu'elles n'appréhendent pas le

Cameroun comme une globalité. C'est ce qui explique certaines pratiques des gouvernants Camerounais qui n'hésitent pas souvent à détourner un projet de développement initialement prévu pour une région X qui n'est pas la localité d'origine du gouvernant qui est à la tête de la structure étatique s'occupant de la réalisation du dit projet, pour la région d'origine du gouvernant en question.

Il faut souligner que de telles pratiques confèrent souvent, au sein de la société Camerounaise, à leurs initiateurs, une légitimité indéniable. Les localités n'hésitent pas souvent en effet à décrédibiliser et à légitimer toute élite qui "ne fait rien" pour le compte de sa localité, pendant qu'elles ne tarissent jamais d'éloges à l'endroit de celle qui gouverne à la faveur de sa région ou "pense aux siens", même si les décisions qu'elle prend bloquent le développement d'autres localités du territoire,

Les associations des ressortissants de telle ou telle localité du Cameroun, par le biais desquelles ces pratiques trouvent généralement un terrain de prédilection, constituent donc des cercles de pérennisation du tribalisme au sein des instances gouvernantes. Dans la mesure où elles condamnent les responsables étatiques à globaliser la gestion de l'Etat. Nous n'en voulons pour preuve à notre propos que le fait que ces structures s'entreprennent, au cours des réunions qu'elles tiennent, à maîtriser les effectifs et professions des ressortissants des localités qu'elles couvrent dans le souci de les "placer" à des postes juteux de l'Etat. Dans cette optique, l'Etat camerounais apparaît comme un "champ de bataille" permanente des régions qui "combattent" pour hisser les leurs à des sites garantissant l'opulence.

L'adoption de la politique de l'équilibre régional avait été dictée par le souci de pailler les inégalités de scolarisation et de développement que présentaient les diverses régions du territoire camerounais au moment de son accession à l'indépendance, lesquelles inégalités trouvaient leur fondement en partie dans l'épisode coloniale. Cette politique s'imposait, disait-on, afin d'éviter de susciter les frustrations des régions accusant un retard. Ebenezer Njoh Mouelle²⁹ partage cette vision lorsqu'il écrit :

Nous pensons que les dirigeants camerounais ont fait preuve de sagesse dans le traitement de la diversité ethnique de leur pays. Si, jouant prématurément la carte d'une intégration nationale peu soucieuse de l'équilibre ethnique, ils n'avaient prêté leur attention qu'à ceux que le hasard de l'histoire avait favorisés en matière

d'instruction et de compétences techniques diverses, le pays n'aurait-il pas été le théâtre de massacres à tumburundaise? La politique de l'équilibre régional a donc été à notre avis, une sage politique ...³⁰

Pourtant, il faut bien reconnaître que cette politique a simplement consiste à refuser de frustrer certaines régions pour le faire à d'autres. Car, quel peut être l'état psychologique de cet originaire d'une localité scolarisée dont l'admission définitive à un concours administratif est rejetée sous prétexte que le quota accorde à sa région d'origine est satisfait; pendant que celle d'un candidat ressortissant d'une zone sous scolarisée dont la moyenne générale obtenue au cours de ce même concours est par ailleurs inférieure à celle du premier, est proclamée, Dans un contexte où les autorités affirment se préoccuper prioritairement de l'unité du pays, n'est-ce pas la une pratique qui pouvait créer en ceux qui en bénéficiaient, un sentiment de protégés tandis que les non-bénéficiaires pouvaient être amenés à traiter (peut-être à juste titre) les premiers avec un relent de mépris ? Dans l'affirmative, peut-on aboutir à l'intégration nationale et à l'unité du pays?

Car si les élites qui sont supposées mobilisées les foules compte tenu de la composante immutabilité qui les caractérisent, sont divisées, n'y a-t-il pas de fortes chances que les masses dont elles peuvent facilement orienter le comportement eu égard à leur statut, le fassent elles aussi et même davantage ? La politique de l'équilibre n'a donc fait que frustrer les uns à la place des autres. Car, quelle peut être la conviction de ce cadre de l'Etat remplissant tous les critères en vue d'une nomination à tel poste, mais qui ne peut pourtant pas voir ses ambitions professionnelles se réaliser pour la simple raison que le quota de sa région en ce qui concerne l'exercice de ce type de responsabilité est déjà atteint ?

On pourrait multiplier des exemples de cette facture pour mettre en exergue la réalité selon laquelle, la politique de l'équilibre régional a contribué à donner aux acteurs camerounais une image de l'Etat comme réalité fractionnée et non comme totalité³¹. On sert l'Etat pour le compte de sa totalité et non pour "intérêt global qu'il est supposé être l'incarnation. Des cet instant, la présence d'autrui s'avère de plus en plus encombrante parce qu'elle est susceptible de retarder et même d'empêcher son ascension. Un tel constat développe automatiquement chez soi un instinct de haine, de compétition et d'adversité envers l'autre. Ngandjui Jean ne se trompe certainement pas lorsqu'il écrit

l'allogène est devenu synonyme de “concurrent” voir “d’ennemi” pour les “indigènes” en ce qui concerne la répartition “planifiée” des postes dans l’administration, des places aux divers concours et recrutements, d’attributions de bourse, ... Les “indigènes” désignent selon les décideurs, par attitudes de rejet et d’exclusion, tous ceux qui, même ayant des grands parents nés dans la localité, ne sont que des “étrangers camerounais,” des “allogènes.” Il ne faut donc pas que, par quelque confusion, tes décideurs fassent une mauvaise appréciation du “quota” devant revenir de droit aux indigènes dans la répartition du ‘gari national’³²

car, dans un contexte ou, malgré les discours édulcorants et lénifiants des pouvoirs

publics sur l’autosuffisance alimentaire, la sécurité alimentaire n’est pas toujours “la chose la mieux partagée” de tous les camerounais³³ les compétitions ayant cours à l’intérieur de l’Etat ont d’abord pour préoccupation de mettre les principaux acteurs et les leurs à l’abri de la disette. Les véritables raisons de la mise en place de la politique de l’équilibre régional au Cameroun sont donc à rechercher dans la conception que les dirigeants se font de l’Etat.

Une conception de l’Etat ayant génère la mise en place de la politique de l’équilibre régional.

Si la non-validité de l’argument selon lequel les Camerounais sont incapables de penser leur pays en terme de globalité ne souffre d’aucun doute, il devient dès lors évident que cet argument ne saurait véritablement justifier le choix des gouvernants Camerounais de la politique de l’équilibre régional comme mode de gouvernement. Cette option trouve plutôt son fondement dans la conception que ceux-ci se font de l’Etat.

L’Etat est en effet conçu comme un butin qu’il faut se partager. D’où la nécessité pour chaque ethnie, tribu, région etc. ... de participer effectivement à ce “partage” au risque d’être oubliée ou lésée. L’idée de “l’Etat éléphant” sous-tend donc la politique de l’équilibre régional. Tout se passe comme si, seule la présence effective d’une localité au cours de ce partage garantit ses intérêts. Ecoutons l’ancien Président:

J'ai donné des chiffres tout à l'heure. Je ne me plains pas, je ne suis pas chagrine du fait qu'il y a des provinces qui ont de l'avantage au point de vue enseignement. Au contraire, j'en suis fier. Mais je dis qu'il faut faire des efforts dans les autres provinces - non pas pour qu'elles rattrapent ... Mais au moins pour que ces provinces aient aussi quelques éléments qui participent à la construction nationale.³⁴

La construction nationale à laquelle il fait allusion ici signifiant participation de toutes les localités au "dépeçage" de "l'éléphant". Car, plus cette participation serait élargie, plus il y aurait harmonie.

Mais une telle conception pêche par la moindre crédibilité de la vision économique qui la sous-tend. En effet, tout se passe comme si l'économie du pays ne connaîtrait pas de phase de récession. Car, elle est appelée à supporter les coûts trop élevés du trop plein des personnels de l'Etat recrutés sur la seule base d'une volonté de faire participer toutes les régions à l'œuvre de construction nationale. La fragilité de cette vision économique a conduit l'observateur de la scène politique camerounaise qui n'était pas encore convaincu de l'effectivité de la tribalisation de la société par la pratique de l'équilibre régional à se résoudre à l'accepter: Les revendications tribales se rapportant à l'accès à quelques sites de la "mangeoire nationale" par les ressortissants de telle ou telle localité se faisant plus pressantes avec le déclenchement de la crise.

Précarité « alimentaire » et exacerbation du tribalisme

La réalité selon laquelle, la politique de l'équilibre régional appliquée au Cameroun a été la pépinière du processus de tribalisation de l'Etat et conséquemment de la société civile se vérifie aisément durant la période de disette instaurée par la crise économique que connaît le pays aujourd'hui. En effet, le déclenchement de la crise s'est accompagné d'un effet d'exacerbation des identités. Cette exacerbation se manifestait par le contour résolument prolix que prenaient les revendications ethniques dans la vie quotidienne des camerounais. La "mangeoire nationale" s'étant rétrécie, les luttes pour y accéder ou pour s'y maintenir devenaient d'une âpreté sans pareille. Aussi considérait-on l'autre comme un "étranger" c'est-à-dire en réalité quelqu'un qui ne méritait pas d'être retenu durant le "partage" de la "portion" du

“gâteau national” réservée exclusivement aux “natifs” de la localité qu’il habite et qui n’est pas sa province d’origine.

Au cours d’élections, on n’hésite pas d’organiser des primaires au sein des ressortissants d’une région dont le vainqueur devait affronter un leader d’une autre région. En réalité, il s’agissait de scénarios qui visaient à opposer les “allogènes” aux “natifs”.³⁵ Dans cette euphorie, très peu de secteurs de la vie sociale au Cameroun échappèrent à ces revendications. Même l’église qui est censée incarner la morale dans une société prêta le flanc à cette envolée du tribalisme. En témoigne le mémorandum du 16 mars 1987 des prêtres autochtones de l’archidiocèse de Douala, lequel stigmatisait la nomination le 21 février 1987, dans cet archidiocèse, de deux évêques auxiliaires bamiléké, voyant en cette décision, une pratique visant à matérialiser “*la mainmise sur le siège archiepiscopal du processus de bamilekisation de la hiérarchie*”, laquelle, à leurs yeux, “*tend naturellement vers la prise du pouvoir politique*”. Le contenu de ce mémorandum laisse aisément entrevoir que l’origine du problème remonte à la pratique des quotas ethniques”.

La flamme ainsi allumée se propagera avec une rapidité remarquable et trouvera son terrain de prédilection sur la diversité régionale et ethnique durant les “années de braise” (1990-1992) marquant la réinstauration du pluralisme politique au Cameroun. Cette réinstauration s’accompagna en effet de beaucoup de troubles sociaux: villes mortes, désobéissance civique. Par ailleurs, chaque région s’entreprenait à rendre publiques, ses revendications par le biais d’un mémorandum généralement adressé au Chef de l’Etat. On peut faire état, entre autres de celui des élèves et étudiants de l’Est, publié dans *Galaxie*, (N° 9 du 19 juillet 1991); celui des bamiléké publié dans *La Détente*, (N° 22 du 12 novembre 1990); celui de la Province de l’Adamaoua au titre révélateur “*un développement handicapé et des espoirs frustrés*”, publié dans *L’Harmattan*, (N° 003 du 04 octobre 1991); celui des, publié dans *Caravane*, (N° 12 du 31 octobre 1991)³⁷.

La toile de fond de tous ces textes révèle une lutte ouverte des ethnies en vue de gagner les sites de l’Etat les plus juteux. A travers les revendications qu’elles émettent dans ces mémorandums, il apparaît que chaque ethnie se refuse désormais d’assister passivement à un “partage” du “gâteau national” juge depuis longtemps un peu trop discriminatoire. Aussi se refuse-t-on résolument de continuer à être des “éternels seconds”³⁸, pour réclamer non plus des postes de conseillers techniques, directeurs adjoints, mais directeur général, secrétaire général de ministère, ministre, etc. ... en insistant sur le

quota. Ceci conduit a des tensions et a des rivalités internes, et interrégionales considérables. Le retour au fédéralisme a deux Etats prôné par le Southern Cameroon National Council, mérite d'être analysé en prenant en compte les frustrations (plus ou moins fondées) dont les populations de cette partie du Cameroun affirment être victime a cause de l'application de la politique des quotas. Il ne fait donc l'ombre d'aucun doute qu'en voulant rassembler toutes les camerounaises et tous les camerounais autour de l'Etat afin de créer une communauté nationale, la politique d'équilibre régional les a plutôt surtout divisés. L'exacerbation du tribalisme constate durant les "années de braise" n'étant que l'extériorisation de ce qu'était le moi groupé des camerounais bien avant cette période. Pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de prendre connaissance du contenu de la lettre de Bernard Fonlon à l'ancien Président Ahidjo en 1980. Des lors, l'effectivité de l'effet "boomerang" semble être indubitable.

Conclusion

Au moment où le constat de la tribalisation de l'Etat et par conséquent de la société civile par le phénomène de l'équilibre régional s'impose, il apparaît impérieux de reconceptualiser l'Etat afin d'éviter de faire de l'œuvre de construction de la Nation au Cameroun, la matérialisation du mythe Sisyphe. Car, le changement de formule (passage de l'Etat Unitaire à l'Etat Fédéral) qui semble gagner la sympathie de certains camerounais, risque également de maintenir le statu quo. Car, à notre avis, il consistera simplement à déplacer les revendications ethniques du niveau national au niveau régional, c'est-à-dire des Etats Fédérés. Ceci est aussi valable pour une option régionaliste. Il faut, en effet, bien reconnaître que les communautés appartenant à une même région sont elles-mêmes en proie aux rivalités d'une ampleur identique à celle des revendications de l'échelon national. En guise d'exemple, les populations du Sud Cameroun, contrairement à ce qu'un observateur non averti pourrait croire, ne portent nullement dans leur cœur, l'actuel Président de la République pour la simple et unique raison que sous son pouvoir, le Sud a connu la même stagnation que sous celui d'Ahidjo et que seuls les "siens" ont pu en bénéficier. Des lors, s'empresse d'ériger le Sud par exemple en une région autonome ne pourra logiquement pas gommer ces frustrations ressenties (à tort ou à raison) par les populations du Sud Cameroun. Au lieu de s'empresse de fractionner un Etat déjà en proie

aux divisions, il faudrait plutôt s'ingénier à voir comment mettre sur pied, un nouvel Etat dont la raison d'être ne sera plus d'inviter la pluralité des ethnies à un quelconque "festin", mais de bâtir une structure dont ceux qui y accéderaient seraient choisis en fonction du critère degré de vision globale du Cameroun. Il s'agit donc de mettre sur pied, un Etat d'homogénéité a priori, lequel s'oppose à l'Etat de juxtaposition des ethnies qui a toujours existé au Cameroun.

Nous avons en effet observé que la perpétuation des consciences locales au sein des structures de l'Etat Camerounais, laquelle y a, par ailleurs trouvé un terrain de prédilection, a été l'œuvre de la pratique de l'équilibre régional qui en réalité instaurait un système de cohabitation des ethnies. Mais cette cohabitation s'est avérée infructueuse: les élites n'agissant que comme des représentants de leur tribu au sein de l'Etat.

Des lors, il nous semble impérieux de reconsidérer les fondements philosophiques ou théoriques devant présider à la conception du nouvel Etat camerounais qui conduira à ravinement de la nation camerounaise. La conception de cet Etat doit en effet transcender ou tourner le dos à une quelconque recherche absolue du compromis entre les régions, compromis que garantirait la présence effective de toutes les ethnies au sein de l'Etat. Car, même si concrètement l'hypothèse de la présence effective de toutes les ethnies au sein des structures de l'Etat se réalisait, (ce qui nous semble une pure vue de l'esprit) il n'est pas évident qu'on aboutirait à une coexistence harmonieuse des différentes ethnies. Des conflits et rivalités pouvant en effet naître au sujet de savoir qui (c'est-à-dire en réalité quelle ethnie) accèdera à tel poste considéré comme étant plus "juteux".

Par contre, nous pensons que le compromis national pourrait facilement s'obtenir avec des gouvernants qui ne sont pas mus par le souci de satisfaire fondamentalement les leurs, c'est-à-dire des responsables étatiques qui, dans leurs actes, gouvernent le Cameroun comme un tout indivisible dont ils promeuvent le développement. Des lors, il ne s'agira plus de nommer, coûte que coûte, vaille que vaille, tel à tel poste au risque de soulever une vague de mécontentement, dans sa localité qui s'estimerait lésée, mais plutôt de ne promouvoir que ceux qui, dans leurs actes, transcendent les pesanteurs des sectarismes, même si sociologiquement, ils se trouvent être originaires d'une même région.

Cela est d'autant plus vrai que la relation nombre de postes à pourvoir et postulants (c'est-à-dire élites issues des deux cents ethnies - chiffre

approximatif) est défavorable aux derniers. (c'est-à-dire que quelque soient les bonnes intentions des dirigeants dans l'application de la politique des quotas, il y aura toujours des mécontents pour la raison évidente que même a l'intérieur d'une même ethnie, il existe des clans qui s'y rivalisent et qui n'appréhendent pas toujours la nomination de tel au lieu de tel autre.

Notes

1. Fogui, Jean-Pierre, L'intégration Politique au Cameroun: Une analyse centre-périphérie, Paris, Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1990, p. 347.
2. La communauté Anglophone cache de moins en moins ses préférences pour cette option. Aujourd'hui, ses tenants du retour au fédéralisme a deux Etats sont regroupés autour du Southern Cameroon National Council (S.C.N.C) dont une délégation vient de silloner certaines capitales occidentales et déposer un mémorandum au siège de l'O.N.U dans lequel sont expliquées les raisons de leur demande de retour au fédéralisme a. deux Etats Francophone et Anglophone. Lire Thomas Eyoum'a Ntoh, "Cameroun. Les Anglophones s'agitent" in J.A.E n° 202, 04 septembre 1995.
3. Balandier, Georges, Sens et puissance, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971 P.56
4. Ziegler, Jean, Retournez les fusils! Paris, Seuil, 1991, p. 22.
5. Lire Mveng, Engelbert, Histoire du Cameroun, Paris, Présence Africaine.1963, p.168
6. Mbala Owono, Rigobert, L'école coloniale au Cameroun. Approche historico-sociologique, Yaoundé, Imprimerie Nationale, 1986, p. 12.
7. Mbassi, Joseph, L'œuvre culturelle Allemande au Cameroun, 1884-1914, Thèse de Doctorat 3e Cycle, Université de Paris III, 1973, p. 43.
8. Mbala Owono, Rigobert, *ibid*, p. 12.
9. Mbala Owono, Rigobert, *Ibid*.
10. Sur la politique Allemande au Cameroun en matière d'éducation de la jeunesse au Cameroun. Lire Mbala Owono, pp. 15 et suivi.
11. Mbala Owono, Rigobert, *op.*, *cit.*, p. 20.
12. Ce chiffre est de Mbala Owono, *Ibid*. IL convient de signaler que MBASSI, Joseph, *op.*, *cit.*; p.57 le porte a 42 000 élèves.

13. Ibid., p. 31.
14. Cette date est de Fogui, Jean-Pierre, op., cit., p. 60. Njong Stephen Tafor, Factors influencing cost education: a case study ten secondary school in the North West Province Cameroon, Mémoire de Master of Education, University of Ibadan, 1980, p. 5, avance Quant a lui l'année 1938 comme date de création du même établissement.
15. Fogui, Jean-Pierre, op., cit., p. 79.
16. Entretien avec Henri Bandolo, Cameroon Tribune, n° 2377 du 18 mai 1982
17. MARTIN, Jean-Yves, Les Matakam du Cameroun, Paris, ORSTOM, 1973, p. 201
18. Cette expression est le pluriel du mot lamido qui désigne les chefs traditionnels de la partie septentrionale du Cameroun. “
19. Ces deux lettres sont du sous-préfet de Garoua et adressées respectivement au Lamido de Garoua le 27 Octobre 1978 et celui de Bibemi le 4 aout 1972. Lire Fogui, Jean-Pierre, op., cit., pp. 296-297. Cette politique recevait d'ailleurs la caution de l'ancien Président de la République. Cf. Cameroon Tribune., n° 2377 du 18 mai 1982.
20. On évalue à plus de 200 le nombre d'ethnies au Cameroun.
21. L'union Des Populations Du Cameroun la qualifiait en effet de « Fantoche »
22. Cameroon Tribune, n° 2377 du 18 mal 1992.
23. Ce renouvellement a eu lieu en 1982.
24. Biya, Paul, Pour le libéralisme communautaire, Paris, ed, Pierre Marcel FAVRE
251987, p. 33.
26. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
27. Richard, Joseph, Le Mouvement Nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris, Karthala, 1986,414.
28. Ta Ngwa Sa'a, Elvis, Coup d'œil sur le syndicalisme au Cameroun. Des origines à nos jours, Yaoundé, Mémoire de fin de formation, ESIJY, 1975, p. 75.
29. Bayart, Jean-François. L'Etat au Cameroun, Paris, Presse de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques. 2e édition, 1985, 348 p.
30. Professeur de philosophie a “l'Université de Yaoundé, il a occupe le poste de secrétaire général du Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais.

31. Préface a Fogui, Jean-Pierre, op., cit., p. 11
32. Lire Le Mémorandum Kirdi, op, cit.
33. Ngandjui, Jean, "Tribalisme ou allophobie" in La Nouvelle Expression, n° 023 du 1er au 07 nov. 91.
34. Le Président de la République est souvent obligé d'accorder des aides en vue de pailler la menace de la famine dans la partie septentrionale du pays.
35. Cameroun Tribune, n° 2377 du 18 Mai 1982
36. Lire par exemple SIPA Jean Baptiste, "Intégration Nationale: Le syndrome Bamiléké engendre l'hypocrisie et la duplicité " in Le Messager, n° 192 du 24 juillet 1990.
37. Sur l'intégralité de ce mémorandum, lire Collectif "Changer Le Cameroun", Le Cameroun éclaté? Anthologie commentée des revendications ethniques, Yaoundé, Edition C3, 1992, 595 p.
38. Pour un inventaire assez exhaustif de ces revendications, lire Le Cameroun éclaté, op. cit.,
39. C'est le célèbre titre d'une lettre que Bernard Fonlon adressa à l'ancien Président Ahidjo en 1980 pour résumer la position la position des Anglophones au Cameroun. Sur le contenu de cette lettre, lire Le Cameroun éclaté, op.cit., pp 265-266.

Régionalisme, Intégration Nationale et Education

Dorothée Kom

Introduction

Le régionalisme est la tendance à conserver ou à favoriser certains traits particuliers d'une région, d'une province. Le nationalisme ethnique équivaut ainsi à l'exclusivisme, à l'ethnocentrisme qui est, en fait, l'exclusion sur la base de la culture ou de la langue fondée sur l'idée selon laquelle il y aurait des niveaux différents et inconciliables d'avancement entre les cultures. Cela peut s'appeler ethnocide, i.e., le refus de parler positivement ou de reconnaître la culture de l'autre comme valable au même titre que la votre. Le caractère péjoratif du terme ne trompe pas.

La régionalisation, par contre, est un concept plus positif. Il constitue le transfert des compétences politiques, administratives et économiques des services centraux d'un pays aux organes régionaux ou provinciaux? Ceci suppose "la création d'un climat de confiance, de solidarité, de tolérance, et de respect mutuel à l'intérieur de l'Etat. Mais ce n'est pas de cela qu'il s'agit ici.

On est à la recherche de l'équilibre entre les exclusions, de micro nations ethniques qui s'excluraient les unes les autres faute de trouver des points de rencontre sécurisante pour assurer la survie de chacune d'elles. Et voilà le Cameroun qui s'engage dans la valse des conférences et des séminaires sur l'intégration ethnique ou régionale, la recherche des éléments de convivialité entre les cultures et les ethnies.

Il y a deux ans presque jour pour jour, le 23 septembre 1993, le groupe dit "C3", entendez: "Collectif Changer le Cameroun" organisait, ici même à Yaoundé, un colloque sur le thème "Ethnies et développement national". Y prenaient part quelques unes des sommités intellectuelles dont regorge le Cameroun. En Juin 1995, s'est tenu, toujours ici à Yaoundé, un autre colloque sur le thème, "Pluralisme culturel et convivialité au Cameroun" organisé par, l'Agence Interdisciplinaire de Recherches Sociales et Culturelles (AGIREC).

J'ai assisté aux deux et je suis convaincue qu'il y en a eu d'autres et sous d'autres formes également. Lorsque j'ai pris connaissance du thème de la conférence d'aujourd'hui, je suis restée quelque peu pensive, devant le foisonnement des débats autour de la question ethnique et de sa relation à la Nation. Cette fois sollicitée pour intervenir activement, je me suis demandée pourquoi ce sujet préoccupait tant les esprits et ce qui avait pu manquer aux débats précédents, pour que les réflexions exprimées constituent un début de solution. Au détour de la réflexion, j'ai compris que la faille devait se trouver quelque part entre des images déformantes que les camerounais ont reçue dans leur vécu quotidien volontairement sectariste, l'aspiration à un vivre collectif informé par une démarche à laquelle tous contribueraient activement, et la difficulté, la peur et la douleur de rompre avec le connu pour un inconnu, encore à inventer.

De l'Équilibre Régional

Avant 1983

IL a été dit et redit: Le concept "d'équilibre régional" renvoie clairement à la politique des quotas ethniques, ou régionaux si l'on préfère, décrétée par Ahmadou Ahidjo en 1982 (décret No 82/407 du 7 Septembre 1982 modifiant certaines dispositions du décret No 75/496 du 3 Juillet 1975 fixant le régime général des concours administratifs).

Traduit en termes d'application par un arrêté du Ministre de la Fonction Publique d'alors (l'Arrêté N 010467/MFP/D du 4 Octobre 1982), le décret consacrait, neuf ans après la proclamation officielle de l'unité nationale, l'aveu du cuisant échec d'une vision qui n'a pu se transformer en réalité sociale: celle de sortir les nations ethniques de leurs solitudes, de leur méconnaissance et exclusion mutuelles pour collecter leurs valeurs humaines, culturelles, morales et intellectuelles et en faire le socle de la création de la Nation camerounaise.

Ahmadou Ahidjo, Père de la Nation, admettait à la face du monde que celle-ci, qu'il disait unie et qu'il avait maille à faire démarrer, était quasiment mort-née. Il reconnaissait que l'Etat qu'il avait dirigé de main de maître depuis près d'un quart de siècle n'avait pas généré une Nation ou les partenaires étaient égaux en droits comme en devoirs. Il reconnaissait avoir tant cultivé et encouragé le repli des ethnies sur elles-mêmes pour se protéger

et assurer leur survie culturelle et parfois physique qu'il fallait leur emboîter le pas et institutionnaliser la pratique de la discrimination dont le résultat positif sur les bénéficiaires était loin d'être démontrer.

Pareille décision politique qui fait le culte de l'excellence par, la vertu de l'origine ethnique et qui conduira à un pouvoir qui tue l'ethnie dans tout ce qu'elle a de positif, d'enrichissant en faisant de l'ethnisme une politique gouvernementale aura un impact néfaste sur l'évolution qualitative de l'intégration sociale au Cameroun. Nous avons hérité de magistrats, de médecins, de gestionnaires de la vie publique au plus haut niveau dont le seul atout pour l'accès au rang des élus est leur appartenance ethnique. Pareille consécration d'une politique des complexes qui prime la médiocrité en brimant l'excellence, prôné le nivellement par le bas, a desservi tout le monde y compris ceux qui en étalent/sont les bénéficiaires.

Outre la volonté de ségrégation tribale, M. Ahidjo aurait pu envisager de procéder aussi à l'équilibre des générations, des genres, des religions pour avantager les jeunes desservis par une administration gérontocratique, sortir la femme de son statut d'enfant demeure à cervelle d'oiseau et donner aux chrétiens de la région que l'on prétend ainsi privilégier par un décret une chance d'accès aux privilèges d'Etat égale à celle dont née à certains nordistes de religion musulmane. Mais seule la volonté de division et non celle d'union commandait pareille démarche, car ces raisons étalent autant, voire plus valables que l'autre, les jeunes et les femmes souffrant à plusieurs niveaux de l'exclusion de la participation à la vie collective. Mais il n'existe encore ni ethnies de femmes, ni ethnies de jeunes. Ce sont des groupes automatiquement assimilés que l'on exhume en temps opportun pour les besoins de la cause. D'ailleurs toute autre considération discriminatoire aurait recruté des bénéficiaires ailleurs que dans le milieu visé par le clientélisme de M. Ahidjo tant il est vrai que ces groupes spécifiques majoritaires, anonymes et occultes dans la pratique sociale, se seraient recrutés aussi partout ailleurs et auraient faussé l'esprit de la lettre. Seul intéressait l'iniquité quant à l'accès basé sur des critères ethniques, aux écoles de formation. Ceux qui en ont hérité y travaillent, il est vrai, avec des affectations des agents de l'Etat vers leurs "villages électoraux", leurs provinces d'origine, c'est-à-dire de celle dont leurs parents légitimes sont originaires. Si cela se voulait une mesure, elle institutionnalisait l'infériorité décrétée des uns qu'elle primait pourtant, consacrant ainsi le culte de la médiocrité sur l'excellence. Le secteur de l'éducation et de la formation des médecins, des administrateurs civils et des

magistrats notamment venait de recevoir la bénédiction du Père de la Nation pour soigner, administrer, rendre justice conformément à leur formation basée sur l'inégalité d'accès aux droits.

Qu'est-ce qui les préparait désormais à une communauté de destin, à la solidarité dans l'effort et réprobatrice? À une approche positive des aspects ethniques? À l'écoute tolérante d'opinions divergentes, ce n'est pas l'exposé des motifs présenté par Ahidjo dans une interview accordée à Henri Bandolo quelques mois auparavant qui rassure. Mais c'était l'ère de l'unité nationale, promue avec l'avènement de la consécration de l'Union Nationale Camerounaise.

De 1983 À 1995: Encore de l'équilibre régional?

Et vint 1983, année de l'entrée du Cameroun dans l'ère de l'intégration nationale qui précède le Renouveau. L'ère dite des chrétiens du Sud, ou des Bété selon la chapelle d'où on parle. L'alternance peut-être, mais non pas des compétences, plutôt des appartenances exclusives. C'est aussi le début de l'ethnocide accéléré. Les clichés ethniques, les stéréotypes, le dénigrement langagier, la persécution du pensant différent, du vivre différent, de l'être différent. Parce qu'on prétend que les Bétés sont des voleurs, on sévit aveuglement, et on institutionnalise le rejet de la collaboration plurielle. Les replis sur l'ethnie se renforcent, et le langage s'aiguise. L'on entend de plus en plus parler des Anglophones tricheurs, des Bamiléké "commerçants véreux et cupides", des Nordistes "taineants" et "jaloux" du pouvoir des Bétés. Les côtiers "jouisseurs" et "vantards", se cacheraient derrière les Bétés pour ramasser les miettes. L'on bâtit et entretient, à partir des cas individuels, des préjugés qui uniformisent le groupe, comme si les tares individuelles étaient automatiquement contagieuses à l'intérieur d'un groupe donné. C'est la faute de l'Etat qui a tout centralise, en concevant, à partir de son centralisme réducteur, des règles qui s'appliquent sans considération des traits distinctifs à tous sauf, comme dans le cas des quotas où il crée la différence pour marginaliser et/ou phagocyter.

Quand l'opposition, pourtant légale, se manifeste, c'est l'ennemi dans la maison", alors, gare! Ose-t-on être critique des décisions présidentielles? On crie "outrage à chef d'Etat" et on tente de sévir. Un célèbre délégué du gouvernement en mal d'argument pour justifier l'état crasseux de la ville dont il a la charge, qui accuse l'opposition de salir sa ville; comme si la poubelle

affichait désormais des couleurs politiques dans Yaounde, capitale du Cameroun. Que voulez-vous qu'y comprenne cet enfant, fils du président du comite de base du parti au pouvoir, lorsqu'il entend le premier magistrat de la ville attribuer a l'opposition, la poubelle puante qui jonche le bord de la route et qu'il a contribue a grossir des déchets, très propres il faut le croire, puisque sa famille est de l'ethnie régnante, que sa mère l'a envoyé déposer plus tôt sur le tas incrimine? Comment ferait-on comprendre a cet autre qu'il est ici au siège des institutions censées le gouverner et le protéger lorsque, par une semaine de pluie torrentielle du mois de Septembre, la case qui abrite sa famille est détruite sur ordre de ceux-là mêmes qui sont charges de veiller au bien-être de tous, sans alternative pendant qu'il est en classe? Comment peut-il éviter le repli sur la protection sure de son groupe de base lorsqu'il constate que les tracteurs destructeurs reconnaissent les cases des "autochtones" de celles des «allogènes» a qui on veut ainsi demander de rentrer "chez eux"? L'épuration ethnique en perspective pour l'intégration nationale, quoi?

L'éducation a la sante constitue l'un des aspects fondamentaux de l'éducation dite de base, et le slogan "sante pour tous en l'an 2000" a constitue l'un des chevaux de bataille dans les discours publics de ce pays. Mais comment le faire vivre a ces enfants de l'Ouest dont les villages sont livres a la typhoïde et a la dysenterie par la volonté d'un ministre revanchard pourtant originaire de l'Ouest qui les prive d'eau potable pour leur faire payer le prix d'un choix politique de leurs parents qui l'a humilié dans le passe? Ne sont-ils pas, les uns, de l'ethnie des exclus et, de l'autre, de celle du ventre? Il n'y a, par rapport a ce problème crucial d'eau potable pour la survie des hommes, aucune forme d'intégration ethnique. Il n'existe pas de vocabulaire susceptible d'expliquer aux enfants de ces villages que celui en qui ils auraient été naturellement tentés de se reconnaître est la cause même de leur malheur. Comment faire leur éducation a la sante qui passe par l'eau potable dans pareille situation? Pour la petite histoire, la devise de la société d'Etat pourvoyeuse d'eau potable est ironiquement: "L'eau, c'est la vie". Quel modèle de vie commune, d'intégration nationale a-t-on voulu imprimer dans l'esprit des élèves de l'institut Monthe détruit par l'armée camerounaise a la veille de la fête dite de la Jeunesse en 1989 en représailles d'un malheureux accident aux causes controversées qui y avait fait près d'une quarantaine de victimes deux mois plus tôt?

La destruction de ce bâtiment scolaire bâti par un prive au vu et au su des autorités de la place était-elle une solution au problèmes? Il avait beau

appartenir a un individu indésirable, il n'en servait pas moins des camerounais sans distinction ethnique, et offrait, par ailleurs, un service éducatif inestimable que l'Etat n'était déjà plus en mesure d'offrir a de jeunes Camerounais. On meurt tous les jours d'accidents causes par le mauvais état de la route à travers le pays. Mais jamais il n'a encore été question de détruire une route, fut-elle un danger évident, pour supprimer une fois pour toutes le danger qu'elle représente. On en interdit accès, comme c'est le cas pour le pont qui relie le marche de Madagascar a la Cite Verte, ou la Briqueterie a Mokolo à Yaoundé, en attendant de trouver une solution acceptable pour la réparation, ou on la répare quand c'est possible.

Comment convaincre les jeunes exclus, hier encore, de l'université de Soa qui ne demandaient, au nom de leur association et pour le bien de la communauté des étudiants, des enseignants et des administratifs confondue, qu'a avoir des conditions un peu plus humaines de transport pour rejoindre leur campus situe a 20km de la ville? Quels crimes ont-ils commis, eux, délégués par leurs camarades, en plaidant pour de l'eau courante, pour des structures de restauration plus saines sur le campus? Comment expliquer le hasard qui a soustrait de la liste des délégués exclus, celui du seul quatrième signataire? A quelle étrange logique intégrante a obéi la décision du médecin-recteur membre assimilé du gouvernement?

Seule la volonté de casser de l'opposant politique justifie la dissolution spectaculaire et pour le moins malheureuse de l'institut des Sciences Humaines(ISH) qu'un célèbre secrétaire General a la Présidence de la République, aspirant a l'Etat multinational, c'est-a-dire multiethnique, estimait intolérable parce qu'il le disait être le "nid des opposants". De tels exemples d'exclusion, d'intolérance, de persécution , d'assassinat intellectuel pour divergence de pensée, d'étouffement de génies dans l'œuf pour cause de règlement de comptes ethniques, cette pratique étatique fermée a la réflexion créatrice, a la démarche positive, a l'esprit de dialogue, de participation plurielle a la construction et a l'amélioration du vivre en commun, sont pléthores, Dans le secteur de l'éducation, il n'est que de mentionner le refus d'intégration des syndicats des enseignants comme partenaires. Font-ils grève pour demander leur participation à la réflexion dans le domaine qu'ils partagent avec leur ministère de tutelle? On y voit un "complot" alors qu'ils ne cherchent qu'a apporter leur pierre a l'édification des stratégies pour l'éducation des jeunes considères par la voix la plus autorisée comme "fer de lance de la Nation" et "espoirs de demain".

D'ailleurs tout indique que le discours intégrant est d'autant plus éloigné des actes que l'ouverture des esprits, la volonté de changement d'attitudes et d'habitudes ne figurent pas dans le répertoire de la pratique gouvernementale de ceux qui prônent l'intégration nationale. Comment expliquer autrement que les Etats généraux de l'éducation, qui n'étaient pas ceux de la scolarisation ou de l'instruction, aient été l'œuvre du seul MINEDUC chargé du secteur de l'éducation formelle, n'associant que marginalement les ministères techniques chargés de l'éducation non formelle? Et l'action gouvernementale est prise en otage par la gestion exclusive d'une des structures dont elle dépend, et au grand dam d'une bonne frange des jeunes contraints à l'analphabétisme par refus de collégialité et de gestion plurielle. Il apparaît clairement que toute action volontairement posée à ce niveau de décision, qui affecte nos existences, nos êtres et notre devenir national pluriels et divers, ne pouvait mieux s'illustrer que par ce refus d'ouvrir l'action gouvernementale à la collaboration et à la participation pleine et entière de toutes les structures concernées. Si, dans ce microcosme de prétendu équilibre régional qui cache mal les velléités régionalistes des gouvernants, le dialogue est une perle rare, l'ouverture vers les autres départements ministériels perçue comme de véritables camisoles de force, voire une sorte de DEM de soi parce qu'ils sont la manifestation de la reconnaissance de l'Autre, de leur complémentarité avec la votre, de la solidarité qui en principe sous-tend leur action et la votre pour la réalisation d'un programme gouvernemental, que faut-il dire de ce que cela présage dans la gestion de l'ensemble national? Quelles stratégies préconiser pour que s'instaure, chez nous, une culture de l'unicité, de la différence, de la diversité dans la complémentarité? Faut-il vraiment suivre ces exemples qui viennent d'en haut?

Et Apres?

Il ressort de ce qui précède l'urgence, pour la communauté nationale camerounaise, de se mettre rapidement à l'école du vivre ensemble que le monde lui offre. A cet égard, les perspectives s'envisageraient à au moins trois niveaux.

Abolir les textes de quotas et autres

Les textes des quotas, et les autres. Puisque les gestionnaires de la connectivité nationale se réclament de ces textes pour détruire ravinement de la Nation Cameroun, il faut les supprimer. Un coup d'œil sur ce qui se passe dans le monde en ce mois d'Octobre nous édifierait. En effet, les prix Nobel viennent d'être décimés à des sommets mondiales pour la qualité de leur contribution à l'avancement de la connaissance. On ne s'est pas embarrassé de savoir s'ils étaient originaires de la race des estropiés, de l'ethnie des bossus ou de celle des fils à papa. Ce qui les a hissés sur le plus haut podium dans leur discipline, c'est bien leur compétence, le caractère exceptionnel de leur découverte, la force de leur intelligence. Et des Américains ont parfois raté, année après année, tous les prix légués à l'humanité par ce noble Suédois, sans que les membres originaires du pays de Nobel ne réclament l'instauration d'une règle de quotas. Pourvu que la domination de l'intelligence de l'homme l'emporte. Le Cameroun a tout ce qu'il faut pour aspirer à mieux qu'à des "honoris causa" qui n'honorent aucune cause. Il suffit que s'instaure l'esprit de la compétition transparente et de la compétence, qu'on laisse faire la nature généreuse quand on sait la prendre pour qu'éclorissent des génies au service de la Nation et du monde. Notre équipe nationale du "Mondiale 90" nous en a donné la preuve. Cette manière de procéder est un devoir humain à l'heure où s'éteignent, difficilement, certes, les replis dans les minis états, tussent-ils linguistiques, et où le monde se transforme en un village où devra vivre l'ethnie de l'homme sur des critères d'excellence, de compétence, du partage, de tolérance et de la solidarité.

Universaliser l'accès à l'école et libérer l'éducation

Pour préparer notre accession à l'ethnie des grands par la force de l'intelligence qui met l'homme au-dessus de l'animal, et par la pratique, il est urgent que l'on s'engage dans la préparation des esprits aux mutations qui parcourent le monde. Cette préparation passe nécessairement par l'éducation, entendue comme moyen de l'épanouissement total de l'être. Il faudrait d'abord libérer récolte des juxtapositions d'exclusions dont le gâchis que sont nos établissements bilingues donnent si bien l'image. Il est indispensable pour la survie de tous de faire de récolte camerounaise ce bouillon des

cultures dont regorgent cette Afrique en miniature pour en faire un tout harmonieux dont la diversité et la pluralité n'excluent pas les identités et les unicités qui les instruisent.

En démocratisant l'accès à l'école pour que garçons et filles, enfants de pauvres comme ceux des riches, les enfants des villages autant que ceux des villes puissent y recéder, on en fait le lieu idéal pour insister sur les similarités, penser ensemble récolte commune et la communauté de demain. Il n'est que de regarder les écoles dites bilingues d'aujourd'hui, Cameroun en miniature ou se juxtaposent les écoles Anglophones et Francophones "séparées mais égales" comme on le disait ailleurs, pour comprendre les modèles dont le Cameroun doit se défaire pour se faire. Pourtant, c'est là que des jeunes responsables de demain auraient pu, pourraient apprendre à intégrer l'existence de l'Autre dans ce qu'il a de spécifique et dans ce qu'il peut avoir à mettre dans la transformation des écoles d'aujourd'hui malades de nos solitudes ethniques entretenues et cultivées; c'est pareil "bouillon de cultures" comme dit l'autre qu'ensemble, les enfants pourront transformer en cadre d'enrichissement en valeurs sociales, humaines, culturelles et mentales dont demain sera fait.

Par l'école, l'on doit ouvrir l'esprit des jeunes à la critique positive, à la vertu de l'humilité. En y exploitant des exemples positifs, en recherchant en permanence l'équilibre entre le stéréotype dépeint et les traits positifs qui établissent l'équilibre, on introduit dans les jeunes esprits le sens de la nuance qui caractérise la tolérance. En effet, à l'heure où l'on célèbre l'admission dans le Commonwealth de ce pays membre de la Francophonie, il devient urgent que nos écoles préparent nos enfants, eux qui ont la chance d'être constamment exposés à ces différences complémentaires, à reconnaître, admettre, intérioriser, à s'appropriier les attributs de la pluralité dans des unicités tolérantes. Il faudrait ensuite libérer l'Education du carcan scolaire qui la tient prisonnière pour la mettre au service des jeunes et des adultes. Tout indique que nos leaders et nos gouvernants, souvent bardes de parchemins, doivent accepter l'humilité de se mettre à l'école des enfants du quartier pour apprendre ou réapprendre les leçons de la tolérance. Nos intelligences au pouvoir ont, à cet égard, une véritable leçon de choses à apprendre des habitants des sous quartiers et des campagnes abandonnées en matière d'intégration nationale. Membres de l'ethnie des laisses pour compte, ils partagent, sans distinction d'appartenance ethnique d'intoxication pouvoiriste, la faim, la misère, l'aspiration commune à la liberté et au savoir

dont les grands professeurs de l'ethnie du ventre et de l'ignorance entretenue se moquent.

Avec l'Education, qui est bien plus noble que l'instruction tout court, l'on interpelle autant les jeunes que les moins jeunes parce qu'elle touche à tous les sujets de la vie. C'est pour cela qu'on la dit tantôt continue, tantôt permanente et spécialisée, adressée aux adultes. C'est par elle que tomberont les prisons ethniques, équilibrées ou non, dans lesquelles nous nous sommes laisse enfermer. Administrée dans la forme adéquate aux divers étapes et besoins de la vie, elle dépolluera les esprits en ouvrant l'individu à lui-même, en l'ouvrant sur l'Autre et sur le monde. Il faudra bien, par elle, habituer les individus et les groupes à l'esprit de copropriété nationale par le biais du dialogue, de la tolérance. Il s'agit de créer cette nouvelle ethnie susceptible de concilier toutes les composantes de notre existence nationale dans toute sa richesse, sa diversité et sa pluralité. Il devient urgent d'inventer l'ethnie du dialogue, de la tolérance, de la concertation, de la recherche permanente du consensus et de l'ouverture véritable. C'est elle qui fera de nous tous des copropriétaires de cette Nation à laquelle tous les citoyens aspirent et appellent de tous leurs cris de solitudes exacerbées par la stérilité de l'enfermement. Il est grand temps qu'on apprenne à observer sans préjugé, à écouter, tant il est vrai que savoir écouter reste le premier des quatre savoirs dans la vie d'un homme et en pédagogie. Ces aptitudes, ces attitudes, participent de ce qui devrait, à terme, devenir notre nouvelle culture: la culture de la démocratie. Elle admet le tout en incluant les parties. Elle exalte ce que l'Etat a de positif, et l'individu aussi, Elle s'apprend et se vit partout et en tout temps. Elle transcende le temps et échappé à toute contrainte spatiale.

Réinventer l'ethnie humaine

Il apparait de plus en plus évident l'apport du Cameroun au concert des nations des experts en richesse et en ressources humaines, intellectuelles, sociales et morales résultera de notre capacité à mener cette constitution de nous par nous-mêmes. Les blocs se forment partout à travers le monde. Des pays d'Europe pris hier comme entités séparées fortes, on est passé à l'Europe des Six, puis des Neuf. A combien sont-ils aujourd'hui? Et combien seront-ils demain?

Le mur de Berlin à cesse d'être, Les deux Corées sont en discussion. La Chine et Taiwan aussi. Il n'est pas jusqu'aux USA, qui jouit encore apparemment de cette grandeur et de cette puissance qui lui a fait garder pour lui seul le nom d'un continent, il n'est pas jusqu'à lui qui ne soit assez stratège pour se considérer comme petite unité et favoriser l'émergence d'une grande Amérique riche de l'existence constructive et collective des uns et des autres. Mais pour nous les habitués aux quotas ethniques assassins, faudra-t-il que nous continuions à faire le culte de l'ethnie réductionniste, du villagisme primitif alors que le monde est un grand village, l'Afrique une simple région de ce village dans le jargon international? Quand nous résoudrons-nous à œuvrer pour la construction de la région Afrique dans le village mondial? Attendrons-nous le décret de l'Assemblée des Nations sur les quotas favorisant l'Afrique pour nous sentir appartenir? Il faudra, peut-être, pour nous Camerounais, que se multiplient, ad infinitum, des exemples d'appartenance concomitante au Groupe Islamique, à la Francophonie, au Commonwealth pour que cessent chez nous la peur et l'exclusion de l'Autre et que commence l'appréciation de la diversité enrichissante.

Il est temps. Il est plus que temps que nous réhabilitons l'Education dans toute la noblesse du concept pour laisser éclore chez nous les multiples valeurs latentes qui seront notre contribution au moulage de la Tribu des Etres Humains, de la Nation de la Personne Humaine.

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The Form Of The State At The Centre Of Development Discourse

Emmanuel Yenshu

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the prospects for regions serving as growth poles for rural development within the democratic dispensation. During the first three decades after independence, power, policy-making, planning and the implementation of development, were concentrated at the centre. This process was actively pursued and supported by both the power elite and the masses who bathed in the warmth of state paternalism. Political pluralism generally implies a reduction of the exorbitant powers of the state, both at the level of the individual and the group or community. Hence an important corollary of this process is political and administrative decentralization. This tendency can be observed in Cameroon with the clamour for various forms of decentralization by the establishment, the opposition and *contestataire* elements. By the time this paper is published a new constitution should have been enacted into law with a certain degree of autonomy for the regions, if we have to judge by the constitutional proposals tabled before the assembly for the November session for the year 1995. The question we are attempting to answer is the direction rural development, once controlled and managed by a strong central authority, will take in the eventuality of regional autonomy. Our exercise will consist in evaluating previous attempts at local empowerment, the role of the state policies in creating regional awareness, and the impact of the transition into democratic governance. This will lead us to look at the factors and conditions which will facilitate the development of regional self-reliance.

Development here is taken in its implied meaning of movement from a set of conditions (social, material, political, cultural) defined as undesirable or detrimental to well-being to another set deemed necessary for or promoting well-being. Such a simple operational definition will help us to overcome the hurdle of an absolutist judgmental telos. This is so because the definition of

these sets of conditions has been shifting with the experimentation in ideology. The trend has been a movement from an economic (material) to a humanistic perspective. Witness the recent abandonment of the physical quality of life index in favour of the human development index. With the shifts, threshold levels also become a shaky issue. We are therefore not concerned with the question of surmounting threshold levels, but with examining political projects (policies) aimed at facilitating the transition process within the development continuum i.e. from the undesirable to the preferred/necessary set of conditions. Rurality is taken in its essential opposition to the urban as a peripheral manifestation, with its cultural and organizational specificity, an agricultural outlook and its partial integration into both local, national and international manifestations of a dominant economic, political and cultural framework (Mendras 1976). Reference to balance implies ethical considerations inserted into policy as a means of ensuring equity in the distribution of resources. As a political consideration, it would imply taking precautions against initiating conditions of exclusion, domination and marginalisation in the implementation of official policy. In short, it is redressing the imbalances so characteristic of the modernization process. The colour this would take would depend on the ideological framework in which the practice of development is set.

Balanced Rural Development In Cameroon Within A Democratic Context

The form the state should take has been justified by a development ideology, inspiring the style of policy formulation and the mobilization of development agents. The choice has fluctuated between centralization and decentralization. Even though Cameroon experimented participants and beneficiaries. The second plan came back to this approach stressing that “the village communities conducted by the most dynamic elements of the population of the rural world” would make for “a greater efficiency of administrative authority.” (Second Plan: 2). This plan instituted “rural action committees” and “young pioneer” villages. However, these structures were to be integrated into a hierarchical structure partially decentralized. This hierarchy moved from the Rural Action committees at the base through the divisional Development Committee to the Regional Development Councils. One has to note here that during the first decade following independence

and reunification, Cameroon was broken up into six regions. The regional organization of the structure of rural development was either prompted by the desire to take regional desires into consideration (WINTER, 1968) or to reinforce state intervention.

Subsequent plans were silent on the issue of village communities until 1980 when it was revived. This period was characterized by a review and revision of development strategies. Again the strategy of creating *village communities* came to be seen as the best approach to rural development. Village communities had to be transformed into political, economic, social and cultural units following the orientations of the dominant single-party state structure. It is worthwhile to note that this policy was launched during the congress of the CNU party, with plans to use it to increase the latter's role in the lives of people in rural areas. Hence the aim of this strategy was not to empower local communities.

Fogui (1987) holds that discussions to institute the experiment in the "village community" approach were held but believes that the experimental phase never started off. On the contrary evidence shows that the shadow of this approach has lingered on. From an ideological perspective, it constitutes an important component of the present regime policy. Paul Biya (1987:59-61) holds that the only way of achieving frank dialogue with the rural areas is through the "frank cooperation and full cooperation of people in expressing needs ... [and] ... by organizing the rural areas into village communities with real autonomous management."

The experiment with the approach has been timid and limited. With funds from the European Development Fund experimental projects have - been set up in Saa, Ntui, Sangmelima and Bafut instead of the seven villages as originally planned. One wonders whether the results of the experiment show qualities of local empowerment which could be a pointer to regional development. An evaluation of one of the growth poles (Bafut) shows that performance can be strongly influenced by a community's history, the cultural perception of development and the inequalities (economic, political, social) between regions (Yenshu 1990: 182-202). This leads us to examine another ideology of grassroots ideology: the community development approach.

Community Development

The earliest attempts at local empowerment in Cameroon are the Nso Women's cooperative societies of the 1950s (Kikuba, 1979; Bamicle 1981) and some "animation rurale" initiatives in French speaking Cameroon (Charlick, 1979.) The Nso Women's initiative was later integrated into the West Cameroon Ministry of Community Development and Cooperatives within the federation of 1961. Prior to that period, nothing had been done to institutionalize such grassroots initiatives. However, the British laid stress on preparing the mandated territories for local self-government through the policy of indirect rule by the creation of native authority areas. Apart from reducing administrative costs, this policy empowered the local populations by providing them with a certain amount of leeway in decision-making. However, power revolved around traditional power structures. With urbanization, the centres of power shifted from the pre-colonial structures to the modern urban centres. Even when the latter coincided with local settlements, the effect was "swallowing up" or marginalization. Moreover, the Native Authority Councils were inefficient due to the internecine conflicts that plagued them. Political differences during the period accompanying independence, further exacerbate the differences. There was therefore no proper background for the Community Development experience in the federated state of West Cameroon. During the federation experiment, the Ministry of Development and Cooperatives functioned as a bureaucratic set-up some form of regionalism in the federal experience between 1961 and 1972, the dominant tendency in administrative organization has been towards centralization.

Ideologies of Centralization

Successive regimes in Cameroon have resorted to the concepts of unity and national integration to justify the centralized state model. The ideology of unity implied administrative centralization with dependent units at the periphery. This model has been marked by paternalism with any autonomy accorded to the regions only in terms of concessions. In real terms there are geographical, economic and social disparities between the regions.

Geographically, there are unequal provinces or regions. While the rest of the country is broken up into many tiny provinces (West, South West,

Littoral, East and North West), the centres of power (North, Centre/South) are left intact. The latter constitute the dominant axis around which power revolves. The rest stand out as a wedge in this game. In terms of economic development the two urban agglomerations of Douala and Yaounde have an overbearing influence on the economy while the minor centres developed from the creation of administrative units are unable to grow into veritable poles because of the isolation resulting from enclavement. The counterparts of this ideology are balanced development or planned liberalism. We will examine these concepts later. Even the federalist experience was integrated within the centralist perspective. West Cameroon, though enjoying the status of a state, was also classified from a centralist point of view as a *region* on the same level with other units. Hence the political, economic and administrative autonomy of this region was quickly lost with the fusion of political formations in 1966 and the 1972 referendum.

The concept of integration has come to imply the existence of one centre in a context of equality between regions. It can be equated with reinforced administrative centralization with no special attention paid to disfavoured areas. The ideology of development in this case is communal liberalism. This is peculiar to the Biya regime.

The Context of Centralization

Several factors favoured the development of this centralized model. The most important of these factors was the precarious nature of the transition into independence. The latter was marred by upheavals and insurrection from the nationalist forces of the UPC. The mode of Cameroon's accession to independence was moreover put into question by these forces. The task of pacification was thus shifted from the colonial state to its successor government or state structure. This was therefore used as justification for absolutist forms of political organization: the ordinances of 1962; the adoption of a one-party state structure; and the personification of power or the personality cult syndrome. If we take the former head of state, President Ahidjo, we find him as a person obsessed with personal power, always afraid of the influence of autonomy on the form of the state. During this regime, autonomy was always believed to lead to the dislocation of state structures. Hence measures which were taken as security imperatives in a period of violence and instability became institutionalised as a style of governance. We

can say therefore that, this Jacobinism was inspired by the shaky nature of the state. Added to this was the near-universalization of the centrist model on the African continent during the period of competition between international capitalism and socialism. The triumph of international capitalism has been accompanied by a dislocation of these structures and the clamour for democracy (popular participation and decentralization).

Ideologies of Autonomous Development Within a Centrist-Regional Perspective

The Cameroon state has also been lured by the appeal of ideologies of autonomous development. These various ideologies were for the most part prompted by international imperatives. An examination of these ideologies will show that they had a regional outlook in their structure and that they can provide the groundwork for building rural development in the regions.

The “Village Community” Approach

This policy option first appeared in the terminology of Cameroon development with the first plan where it implied units created in the rural areas to integrate inhabitants both as for providing government grants, thus creating a dependency relation between the rural areas and a state structure which had the pretensions of paternalism (Yenshu, 1990: 101)

The differences between “animation rurale” and the community development approach were very slight. The latter was based on the concepts of self-help and sensitization (Barbier, 1979). It enabled the community to act progressively on the process of change in which it was involved. Its goals were implied in the objectives of the second plan but were formally outlined in decree 63/OP/138 of April 14th 1963 creating the animation service. This decree instituted regional planning and decentralised implementation. In spite of this theoretically sound base, the approach was crippled by structural deficiencies which led to its demise less than a decade after its institution (Charlick, op.cit.).

Partly in reaction to the fragility of these two approaches and partly on account of the administrative centralization with its accompanying streamline of policies, “animation rurale” and the Community Development initiative were merged. The first step in the fusion was the transformation of the *Zones*

d'Action Communautaires et Culturelles (ZACC), created in 1970 to cope with rural exodus and mobilize youths into community development centres. This development approach was only nationalized by 1981 when a community Development plan was adopted. We can safely say that these pseudo-policies were only experimental, yielding but minimal results which nonetheless inspired grassroots initiatives. These initiatives are most evident in rural water supply, farm-to-market roads and, to some extent, agricultural extension. The greatest echo is in the formation of associations of an ethnic nature with the vocation of community welfare and cultural revival. Whether they are code-named *Associations d'Elites Amical des Ressortissants* or *Cultural and Development Association, Union or Meeting*, their domain of action is the ethnic group. This phenomenon has also been extended to youth associations and students movements in post-primary schools.

When ethnic interests coincide with regions or when ethnic interests converge at regional level, regional associations are formed. Examples of such associations are Fako Elements Cultural Association (FECA), Manyu Elements Cultural Association (MECA), Ndop Elements Cultural Association, South West Elite Association (SWELA), North West Cultural and Development Association (NOCUDA), LaaKam (Bamileke Cultural Association), the Kirditude Movement, the Gbaya self assertion movements and Essingan (Beti Cultural Association). Occasionally some groups are also mobilized at the regional level to table lists of grievances to the central administration. Those could be in terms of economic development, nominations into government and the administration or support to autonomous development.

One has to be cautious in generalizing this experience. Such formations tend to appear only where there is a coincidence of ethnic and regional interests. Where ethnic interests are divergent and conflicting, such associations are difficult to come by. They are integrated into the logic of governance proper to a situation where the power game does not revolve around constituted ideologies. The tendency in such situations is to fall back on communal sentiments. This was intensified with so-called policies of self-reliance.

Autonomy Through Self-Reliant Development Strategies

During the hey-days of the single party experience, the Cameroon state adopted as one of its “centrist and dirigistic economic policies”, the slogan of self-reliant development (Ndongko, 1985:156). It was adopted at the congress of the single party, the CNU, in 1975.

Placing agriculture as the basis of all development, it aimed at protecting smallholder farmers, fostering domestic demand, increasing productivity and achieving food self-sufficiency. Support was also given to cash crop production through constant increases in commodity prices. The target was to make peasant production the “main plank of agricultural development” and transform Cameroon into “the storehouse of Central Africa” (Ndongko, 1985:159-160). An important corollary of this policy was therefore the Green Revolution (Ndongko, 1984), through which the government hoped to replace the importation of foodstuff. Development missions set up to speed up this process were mostly of a regional character, as the examples below show:

MISSION	REGION COVERED
Mission de Développement de Cultures Vivrières, Maraichères et Fruitières (MIDEVIV)	Essentially in the Centre and South Provinces although meant to cover entire national territory
Wum Area Development Authority (WADA)	Wum Area (Menchum)
Mission de Développement du Nord Ouest (MIDENO)	North West Province
Zone d'Action Prioritaire Intégré-Est (ZAP I-EST)	East Province
Société de Développement de la Riziculture dans la plaine de Moo (SODERIM)	West Province
Maiserie de l'Ouest (WESTCORN)	West Province
Société de Développement de la culture et de la Transformation de Ble (SOCEBLE)	Northern Provinces
Mission de Développement d'Ombessa	Centre
Upper Nun Valley Development Authority (UNVDA)	North West

The question of their performance is out of the scope of the present paper, although it suffices to say that this has been a differential process. If some have performed badly and are at the point of liquidation, it is due to state-dominated management with its habitual clientelism and political interference. Such attempts, however, provide the groundwork on which regional development can be built, provided they are extricated from the fetters of centrism. This would depend to a large extent on the formation of regional consciousness. In this process, centralization has paradoxically set the pace for this tendency.

Going Back To One's Birth Place Or The Paradox Of Centralization.

The primordial aim of centralization was building a single national consciousness. Hence the concept of nation building. We have seen that the ideology of centralization revolved around the concepts of unity and integration. There has therefore been a tendency for the establishment to engage in policies aimed at officially moving from ethnic to national cultures. The streamlining process has had as central themes:

- a persistent criticism of tribalism as an administrative practice;
- a criticism of regionalism, perceived in official circles as counterproductive to national solidarity and promoting separatism. Witness the repeated reference to demands for autonomy as coming from “demons of division” and the persistent insistence on the fact that Cameroon is one and indivisible. However, strategies adopted to foster this ideology have proved counterproductive.

Firstly, the policy of balanced regional development meant to redress cultural, economic and administrative disparities inherited from the colonial experience (Ndongko, 1985:160), has instead promoted strong regional feelings. The political practices accompanying this policy, transformed the region of origin into a source of legitimacy. In the domain of education, bursaries were attributed to students with the area of origin as underlying criterion. Students from “underscolarized” regions were most favoured. In the same vein, a regional balance was always struck when selecting candidates

into the public service. Nominations into top governmental positions also operated on the basis of this logic. Elite were also expected to identify themselves with regions which justified their positions within the set-up. These elite have often been expected to obtain certain favours from the state for their regions.

This has led to a situation in which the state is conceptualized as a single “national cake” situated at the centre and which has to be shared between peripheral regions. There is no nation to be collectively built but a “cake” to be equitably distributed. Where this cake comes from is no concern of the region. An important component of this strategy is for successive regimes to recruit their top brass from the head of state’s region, which is actually the real centre. This tendency has given the political struggle a strong regional connotation, with alternation perceived as a regional affair. This is reflected in the formation of political parties and the democratic vote (cf results of Presidential elections of 11 October 1992).

Moreover, the official endorsement of monolithism through the 1966 law of associations disbanded all official forms of political expression. Ethnic attachments thus remained the only mode of independent/autonomous public manifestation. Hence, the proliferation of ethnic associations at times spurred on by an exotic Anthropology which highlighted and at times blew up positive indigenous values.

Lastly, conflicts arising out of the domineering nature of the post-colonial state or its tribal exercise of power have also been instrumental in enforcing regional consciousness. The pacification of the Bamileke and Bassa regions during the independence period, has left indelible marks on the collective conscience of the inhabitants of these areas. Marginalization, exclusion from power and repression from the state, have also largely contributed to the formation of ethnic consciousness. Ethnic tensions arising from disparities between regions and ethnic groups are also accountable for a regional collective conscience. It is not strange therefore to find reference made to “strangers” within the national sphere. It is not therefore the nation that mattered but the individual’s birth place. The imperative today is therefore that of going back to one’s region, developing one’s region and struggling to project that region.

Political Pluralism and the Regional Question

The revival of the question of political pluralism has suddenly released latent claims for regional autonomy. This can be exemplified in the calls for the revision of the centralized state. During the nation-wide debate on constitutional reforms, regional elite were quick to show preference for autonomy of some sort or other. The Bassa elite called for the creation of a province coinciding with the ethnic limits of this group; peoples of Donga/Mantung and Bui divisions have been clamouring for the creation of a far North-West Province; while at a lower level petitions are constantly addressed to the central government for the creation of new administrative units to coincide with ethnic cultural zones. These claims are at times openly championed by elite associations and political formations making of regionalism an imperative within the new dispensation. The question we have to ask now is that of the viability of the regions.

The Development Potential of Regions.

We are working from a given: that regions are granted autonomy in development policy and planning and that the state is left with a coordinating role and the exclusive control of domains of sovereignty. This hypothesis becomes imperative as an operational guide since regionalism is devoid of any meaning if it makes no reference to autonomy. It only becomes important when we perceive it from the perspective of striking a balance of power between the centre and the periphery. A definition of the various models existing as distinct ideal types is thus rendered clear. Here the centralized, centre-down model is characterized by its stress on the primordial role of the state and the dependence of the region/periphery while the regional model is based on decentralization, the empowerment of regions (autonomy) and the coordinating role of the state. Given this to be tomorrow's model, what will be the determining factor in the development potential of regions? We have identified three important factors which will determine performance: the present state of development of the region; the availability of technological and natural resources; and the socio-cultural context.

Inequality In Regional Development

The outcome of the regional experience will depend largely on the legacy of regional development with the centralized state. The attempt at equilibrium or regional balance has achieved much in terms of redressing inequalities but has not succeeded in tilting the balance. The economy of Cameroon is still largely dominated by the Douala metropolis. Even other micro centres operate as feeder zones to this area. This is the case of Limbe, Kumba, Bamenda and the hinterland. Centralization initiated since 1972 had the effect of suppressing other development poles in favour of this metropolis. The Limbe port and the Tiko wharf were suppressed while the Kribi port was neglected. In the same way the Mamfe river port, the Yoke Hydro-electric plant was also suppressed while the Garoua port does not have the attention it deserves. Yaounde had remained largely an administrative centre despite the implantation of some industrial units. The effect of this situation is the development of a unique metropolis at the coast with a vast rural periphery in the hinterland. Thus even within the regional experience, all other regions will have to depend on the economy of the Douala region. The only way for success will be to develop new growth poles out of the regions. In this regard the, central authority will still be largely instrumental in providing equilibrium, not by controlling the growth of buoyant regions but by providing assistance to less privileged regions. The experience of development authorities in existence in some provinces (cf nifra) could be extended and instituted in all regions. Moreover restricted integrated projects such as the UNVDA, SODERIM, SODECAO, SODECOTON, WADA, MISSAMBE, SEMRY, SODEBLE, which are of a regional character and whose performance within the centralised models has been counterproductive, necessitating privatization and lapidation at times, should be revived and integrated within the *development authority* framework.

However, the development authority model should be redefined and revised. Its mission should transcend sectoral preoccupation whether they be exclusively economic or they be strictly social. The perspective of development should be comprehensive enough to have any real meaning. Hence regions could take over from the central authority in the programming, execution and management of development. They would become an important element in building regional autonomy. The most

probable obstacle to this autonomy process would be in the inequality in access to resources.

Inequality In Resources

There are glaring disparities in the sources of financial and human resources between regions. Not all regions have the same possibilities of raising income through taxes, royalties and custom duties. This is a function of the level of economic development, the availability of natural resources and the development of the financial market. The development of human resources (skills, research) has been largely influenced by the access to western style education. Regional disparities are very evident in enrolment and performance in secondary and higher institutions of learning. The South, Centre, West and Littoral Provinces are still maintaining the lead in this domain.

To achieve a balance, we may still paradoxically rely on the state. The latter may have to play a moderating role at the initial stages by providing assistance and incentives. Even then regions would have to show a lot of initiative in raising and managing revenue, developing manpower and liaising with financial institutions. In this regard, efficiency and accountability will be cardinal values. The balance in human resources can only be obtained through a reinforced educational system reoriented at the level of the country - a system which pays greater attention to technical, vocational and utilitarian general education.

Regional Cultural Disparities

What would remain a constant in regional development and which had to be taken into consideration with the new dispensation is the issue of disparities in traditional social structures and cultures, the magnitude of modern influences and the resultant attitude to development and the central state. Acephalous socio-political ethnic formations and micro-state based centralized systems co-exist. These formations came under the influence of modernization at different times, thus influencing attitudes to political centralization and the development process. Despite efforts at containment, centralized societies have tended to function as semi-autonomous units within the national framework, playing a strong role in socialization, to the

extent of nearly constituting a threat to the post-colonial state (FOGUI, 1987:28) They have also constituted important poles of economic development by asserting independence from central authority (COURADE, 1982). This was very pronounced with the self-reliant ideologies and practices mentioned above. Although this constituted an obstacle to centralization, they could be an important asset in the regional experience. Unfortunately, the experience with these powers has always led to suspicion and consequently their relegation to the role of auxiliaries of the post-colonial state (UNOBO, 1987:103; 1977 law on chieftaincies; FOGUI, 1987:47). Such contradictions are going to have important repercussions for the regional experience. .

The attitude of the acephalous societies has been shifting from one of wilful acquiescence with the dominant centralized authorities to a reawakening to the call for regionalism as a reaction to a state which has frequently come under tribal motives. This would affect the performance of the regional model in a different way. Given the extremely narrow and variegated frame work of ethnicity in Cameroon, conflicts are likely to arise among elites of competing ethnic groups over the control of the regional administrative structure and the programming of development. This would be simply a transposition of present conflicts at state level to the decentralized units. This would also be true of state-based societies.

Conclusions

A few years ago, after highlighting the role of regional specificities in the performance of development projects, I ended up my dissertation with the following lines:

Regional schemes could create economically viable networks which could grow into regional economies. Such regional development zones [/] economies could then be integrated into a wider national economy. In this way, meaningful self-reliant development could be achieved both at local community level and at the national level (Yenshu, op.cit:216).

This conclusion was motivated by an assessment of Cameroon's rural development history and the evaluation of a context-specific "bottom-up" approach to development. Today this conclusion is not only proved correct by a scientific analysis of the type found in an academic paper. The clamour

for regional autonomy has become a political imperative. Political imperatives do not always tie in with scientific fact. Hence our question: would autonomy be feasible?

Our task in this paper has been to both explore the conditions that favour the transition from centre-down approaches to decentralized “spatial policies” (Moudoud, 1988:57) within a new territorial political organisation and the conditions for eventual sustainability. Before the advent of democratization, such a task should have been doomed to futility or termed speculation because of the political context for as Moudoud (*ibid*, 73) holds, it is an essentially political question. Fortunately we have a conducive political atmosphere with both the civil society and the political class all agreed on the question.

Our argument is that the building blocks of the regional alternative are to be paradoxically found in centralization itself. First through the policies of regional balance, balanced development and the encouragement of piecemeal grassroots initiatives. These packages of policies helped to focus on the region as the centre of legitimacy. Secondly, and this is where the paradox is more pronounced, through the development of the region as the centre of a strongly centralised power structure.

We have also argued that the conditions for viability are found in the level of development of the regions, the inequality in the distribution of human and natural resources and in regional cultural disparities. This leads us to conclude that the state will still have to play a prominent role in planning, assisting and hence redressing inequalities between the regions.

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Ethnicity and Party Politics in Cameroon: The Politics of Divide and Rule

Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Antoine Socpa

Introduction

The socio-political climate in Cameroon on the morning of democratic opening (19 December 1990) can be described as characterized by the euphoria of political pluralism and newly found freedom. The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) which succeeded the Cameroon National Union (CNU), the one-party since 1966, suddenly splinter into myriad of political units. Consequently, the number political parties grew from one in 1990 to 123 in 1995 (MINAT, 1995). The political crystallization of ethnic conscience and the need to affirm such a reality buried for decades in the innermost recesses of the mind, began to resurface in forms of political agitation and social upheavals, federalist and secessionist threats. Ahidjo's dream of having a strong, united and stable nation had suddenly shown the fragile nature of his policies. Had his constitutional successor failed to manage the transition because of his entrenched ethnic love and affiliations? Or had socio-political trauma of Ahidjo years suddenly found full expression in the long suppressed sense of being ethnic? Had the policy of national integration of the New Deal given way to ethnic pressures and to the manipulations of the mechanics of political survival?

It must be admitted that the one-party system (CNU: 1966-1985; CPDM: 1985-1990); had failed to satisfied the aspirations of most Cameroonians. The psychological ineffectiveness and inefficiency of big political speeches and literature (oral, written, musical) in the building of the Cameroon nation had also failed to achieve the desired goal. Ahidjo preached and held national "unity" dear to his heart and crushed any dissenting voices along the road (1958-1982). Biya came along with moralisation of national life and the need to build a more integrated nation but his policy apparently soon gave way to the ethnicisation and polarisation of the state, all in an effort to survive politically if even what one believed in would go down the drain.

Political pluralism with its ethnic character has upset the cohesion of a fragile nation. Based on the present state of affairs, some political observers agree with the anti-democratic forces, close to CPDM party in 1990 that Cameroon and the rest of Africa were not yet ready for multi-party politics. The holders of this position argued that the one-party system was a unique forum for national dialogue and unity but they failed to highlight the massive abuse or violation of basic human rights by the one-party state. Thousands of people lost their lives by simply expressing a contrary view within the one-party system.

The perception of democratic pluralism as a disruptive element of national unity and integration based essentially on many factors. Ethnicity seems to play a critical role in politics; that managers of civil society have instead harnessed the ethnic component of the nation to their own benefits. The democratic process in Cameroon has revealed a strong ethnic configuration of political parties legalised between December 1990 and May 1995. These include the ethno-regional trends of global results of legislative and presidential elections of October 1992; the exigency of decamping of certain “undesirable” ethnic groups of some localities to their province of origin; the hunting down of some Cameroonians - classified as “allogenes or foreigners” (Anglophones and Bamileke) - in their own country in the streets of towns and cities of the South and Centre provinces such as Ebolowa, Akonolinga, Mbalmayo, Sangmelima, Yaounde (the political capital of Cameroon); the sabotage of the economic potential of businessmen and small traders in these same places (see *Tribus Sans Frontieres*, Rapport No 2, Juin 1993), etc. These conceptual events have taken place and the powers that rule Cameroon have never taken the trouble to bring the guilty to justice or to make at least a public condemnation of these Middle Age practises.

The Problem

The question one may asked, is whether democratic pluralism on course in Cameroon seeks peace in order to consolidate national unity and national integration. The answer can only be in the affirmative. But current political action and policies seem to sow rather seeds of discord than welding Cameroonians together. The new 1996 constitution classifies Cameroonians into natives and foreigners (allogenes, indigenes) and makes them foreigners in their own country. In very simple terms, political pluralism is a good thing

but it cannot be given full expression in a multi-ethnic Cameroon and its delicate inter-ethnic discourse. The unity and integrity of this country can only be guaranteed on the basis of limited pluralism. The nation can only survive as a stable, united and strong nation, on limited pluralism. Given the multi-ethnic nature of Cameroon, no right thinking politician should permit the existence of more than four political parties. But, on the contrary, the ruling party, has encouraged unabatedly the establishment of many political parties on the pretext that this is democracy. It is nothing but destructive pluralism whose negative effects are so vivid in people's minds since the dawn of democratization in 1990. The policy of divide and rule seems to be very much the soul of the ruling government.

Within the present world order, the importance and necessity of democracy as a mode of governance *par excellence* is at the same time transcendental and vital for the success of governmental action. Over the last couple of years democracy has flourished in former dictatorial and oppressive regimes. The Republic of Benin is a case in point. General Kerekou was democratically removed from power and he was democratically re-elected by the people who vomited him five years earlier. What a shining example. That same process has stopped on the doorsteps of Cameroon under the fallacious pretext that it will destroy ethnic conviviality. Cameroon has lost its leadership in Central Africa by simply assassinating the democratic process. The decree imposing government delegates on elected councils and councillors contradicts the very basic principle of democracy. The maintenance of unpopular ministers in a cabinet seems to ignore the will of the people, the source of power, authority and legitimacy.

The necessity for promoting political participation, social peace and tolerance is the cardinal virtue politicians must acquire in order to govern an ethnically diverse country like Cameroon. At this level, the question is how can we consolidate or achieve national integration in a context of democratic pluralism. Is ideological pluralism serving the interest of disintegration of the Cameroon? The present ethnic polarisation in the political arena seems to enhance the virtues and validity of the one-party state but also questions the capacity of effective integration of the different ethno-social sensibilities by the present brand of political pluralism.

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Popular Participation As An Expression Of An Alternative

The democratic process in Cameroon should aimed at the political enculturation of the masses, political participation, a real political alternative, the promotion of a better understanding of muddled theoretical democratization and the effective protection of fundamental human rights. The experience over the years has been negative. These democratic goals could not be achieved in an atmosphere of distrust and lack of confidence in the ruling elite whose desire to maintain the *status quo* is evident in their action, words and deed. Democracy in Cameroon seems to be prepared and served by people who are still entrenched in the logic and methods of a one party system in which critical views were considered anathema and punishable with both psychological and physical elimination. The presence of the international community and its insistence on the respect of basic human rights has saved the democratic process in Cameroon from total collapse. The Baule and Harare declarations may be endorsed by politicians in public political statements but the sub-consciousness dictates the internal logic of a one-party state.

The multi-party experience in Cameroon has been marked by a series of ethno-social violence. Even after the declaration of Baule, the state was not prepared to give democracy a chance in Cameroon. On May 26, 1990, the state used coercive force to frustrate the launching of the Social Democratic Front party in Bamenda. Six people were slaughtered during that incident. The false dramatization of the incident by the National Television showed the state's attempt to conceal the facts about its brutal efforts to suppress alternative political visions and perspectives. The nation came to conclusion that the ruling elite was not prepared to democratize national political life. The incident generated and energized the popular political participation at a time people were not yet sufficiently impregnated with a democratic culture. Over the last couple of years, the continuous decline of the economic fortunes of Cameroon has convinced many Cameroonians that the regime in power seem to be incapable of improving the quality of life and decreasing levels of poverty. Fraud and official corruption seem so apparent and evident and the arrogance with which public officials use and manipulate state resources", have further convinced the electorate that the CPDM had to go. The opposition parties, especially SDF and NUDP, have emerged as the strongest parties capable of providing an alternative political program. The

ruling party has tried to frame these parties as ethnic or regional groupings with no national image. In some opposition party strongholds, the ruling party has been ridiculed and held in contempt”.

The basis on which political parties and their ideological action have been built, seem to constitute a major constraint to the philosophy and ideal of a united, stable and strong Cameroon as a nation. The encouragement of the profusion of political parties on cultural and ethnic principles destroys the very basis on which the principle of national integration was built. From among the hundreds of parties that exist in Cameroon, very few command popularity outside the ethnic niche in which they were born. MP (Mouvement Progressiste) based in Douala, could not even win a single seat during the January 1996 local elections in its ethnic temple. The organization of the SAWA demonstration was simply a desperate act of people who had failed to muscle ethnic political sentiments in their favour.

The independent press which translates the collective will of citizens to participate in the democratic process is also being frustrated to serve its role as the third force. Official statements aimed at the international community seem to indicate that democracy is a tangible reality in Cameroon. But, in fact, such official declarations simply confirm the fact democratic intentions are the political and economic weapons legitimising hold on to power and guaranteeing the flow of bilateral and multi-lateral subsidies from international institutions and sources. Consequently, minority governments continue to hold onto power and survive despite their unpopularity among the electorate. What may be referred to theoretically as “presidential majority or mouvance présidentielle” in some African countries is in fact a minority hold on the majority.

While the ruling party make official press statements indicating the democracy is alive in Cameroon, the same ruling party is muzzling up the independent press and refusing permission to other political parties to hold political rallies and meetings. The confiscation of the public media, the unequal distribution of time on radio and television also constitute the indelible spots on the dirty linen of Cameroon democracy.

The One-Party State (CNU, CPDM) And National Integration

Multi-party politics was a common feature of Cameroon political life before and after independence. The imposition of a one-party state by

Ahidjo in 1966 portrayed political pluralism as an expensive mechanism for the nation's scarce resources, and detrimental to the development of a young nation (Ahidjo, 1968). In as much as this was true, Ahidjo's final goal was to harness all political forces and emerged as a "powerful uncontested chieftain". Such a move, however, ended in the dissolution of all existing political parties (UC, KNDP, CUC,^{iv}) to constitute the Cameroon National Union. For almost 19 years (1966-1985) CNU brought together all the separatists, ethnic and regional factions into one dictatorial structure that consolidated and provided apparent national image and unity.

For Ahidjo and his acolytes (Lombard, 1969; Prouzet, 1974) national unity was sacrosanct and a source of progress and guarantor of social, economic and political stability. In his general policy speech at the Bafoussam congress of CNU on 13 February 1980, President Ahmadou Ahidjo declared confidently that the Cameroon National Union was "the authentic incarnation of the ambition and the emancipation of the Cameroonian people ...". For him it represented the true aspirations of the Cameroon people and their will to live as brothers and sisters in one house, under one father and in one country, irrespective of their ethnic origins and diversities. Furthermore, dissenting voices were severely punished and any political discourse contrary to the principle of national unity were considered anathema or high treason and repressed with the most severe action.

Democratic Pluralism And Ethnic Violence In Cameroon

When the Cameroon National Union (CNU) metamorphosed into the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) in 1985, the change was rather in name but the political ethos remained fundamentally the same. The CPDM continued to be the dictatorship of the minority ruling class chosen rather for their loyalty and dedication to the person of the head of state than on the common will of the people. The response of Cameroon politicians to the bells of Baule came in homeopathic doses. Firstly, massive demonstrations were organized in Yaounde, Douala, Buea, Kumba, Bamenda, (*marche de soutien au renouveau*) by Cameroon officials to reject the democratic discourse following the launching of the SDF party in Bamenda on May 26, 1990. The Mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac declared then that "l'Afrique n'est pas encore mur pour la démocratie" (Africa is not matured for democracy). Now that he is President of France, watchers of the

African political scene suspect, he may frustrate the democratic process in Francophone Africa.

Secondly, despite President Mitterand's call in 1988 for the democratization of national political life, it was not until June 28, 1990, during the second ordinary congress of the CPDM party that President Biya announced "une eventuelle concurrence" (a possible opening of political life). The real reasons for his procrastination and reluctance to give people the voice would show up later in a number of actions to frustrate the Cameroon electorate. The promulgation of Law n°90/053 of December 1990 was a praiseworthy act. The law granted freedom of speech and association. But the practice was another thing. Since 1990 the actions of the president and his party have, instead frustrated the democratic process. His anti-democratic behaviour include non-existence of neutral electoral commission; ethnicisation of national political life; rigging of 1992 presidential elections, non-application of the tripartite conference decisions, the enactment of undemocratic decrees, imposing of non elected officials on councils with democratic elected councillors; etc.). Is this advanced democracy? The resistance to the true democracy by the ruling party finally collapsed under the pressure of the international community.

Thirdly, apparently, ethnicity, a reality once abhorred by the same ruling elite, is being harnessed to frustrate the entire democratic process. In its effort to capture the vital moments and feelings, the ruling class turned to ethnic lobbies and pressure groups (Essingan, Ngondo, Laakam, CRATRE^v, etc) to fan ethnic sentiments and use them for political ends (Zambo, 1994). Ethnic clashes and tensions throughout the country seem to have deep political motivations. They have increased in intensity while the ruling party seems to turn its eyes away. Such tensions have caused and brought untold sufferings to many. Some examples may illustrate the point:

1. Atrocious pictures of dead bodies of Arab Choa and Kotoko slaughtered in the streets of Kousseri on the 29-31 January 1992 were shown on the national television;

2. Following the presidential elections of 11 October 1992, the hunting of foreigners ("allogenes" or the invaders") was organized in some suburbs of Yaounde such as Emana, Nsimeyong, Ekombite and Oyomabang. In several towns of Centre and South provinces (Mbalmayo, Ebolowa,

Akonolinga, Sangmelima, Ebolowa) similar witch-hunts were organized. While the Anglophones and Bamilekes were being chased out of these predominantly Beti towns, the ruling elite raised not a finger. But went on to declare a state of emergency in the North West Province after violence brought out after the declaration of Biya as president by the supreme court. Similar violence and destruction of property in the South province did not receive the same sanctions. The destruction of economic potentials of Bamileke, Anglophones and Northerners in the Centre and South provinces were targeted.

3. The impression that political power was reserved to some groups or tribes of Cameroon was driven home through public and private audiences. “A Bamileke at the Presidency! Never”. These are the well known words of a senior Beti politician who vowed no Bamileke would ever become president of this country”, The Mayor of Yaounde, a Beti declared publicly that Anglophones were enemies in the house (La Republique du Cameroun) during a public rally held on the ground of City Hall. After visiting and listening to the grievances of the people in Bamenda the present sultan of Bamum, then Minister of Territorial Administration, said the North-West and South-West provinces should be allowed to separate and have an independent existence. He was never fired but he admitted Anglophones were different. Actions speak louder than words. An Anglophone can never be the president of this country was the message sent out after the rigging of the 1992 presidential election. There were clear illustrations of the in-depth animosity against Anglophones who have fought to maintain their identity within a nation they freely chose to associate with. But they are treated as if they are foreigners in their own country.

4. The arrest, or the attempted arrest and the beating of opposition leaders (Samuel Eboua, Mboua Massock, Jacques Ekindi, John Fru Ndi, etc.) by the security forces have shown the apparent deep involvement of the ruling party.

5. Repressive measures have been against populations that support opposition parties. Villages in the West and North-West provinces have often been harassed by security forces.

6. The militarisation of the country by the creation of Special Operational Command Posts in certain provinces and regions of Cameroon were signs of a government having lost popular support and could only rely on brutal force or organized coercion. The ethnicisation of the military seems to be designed to further frustrate other ethnic groups within the union. There are fifteen army generals: one is an Anglophone and 14 Francophones (3 Bamileke, 5 Beti, 2 littoral, 3 Grand Northern 1 from the east). The dominance of the Beti ethnic group in the top military ranks has emerged over the last six years.

Furthermore, social tensions, sustained by ethnic lobbies and pressure groups such as Action directe, “ca gate ca gate, commandos BETA, etc.) confirmed the bitterness of the battles among ethnic groups around the polling stations. The intra-ethnic solidarity, believed to have been consolidated during the long years of ideological and political monolithism, proved the fragility of such a construct.

Ethnicity, Regionalism and Political Pluralism

The social transformation of Cameroon since colonisation has made the towns and cities of Cameroon the citadel of true ethnic conviviality and the ideal focus of inter-cultural exchanges. When one takes a head count of the 110 political parties in the country, the major towns serve as the administrative headquarters of 85% of political parties. At the time of completing this paper, Bertoua and Ebolowa are the only province headquarters (of East and South) that do not have local political party headquarters. It is not just the remoteness of these towns but also the ethnic solidarity that binds the elite to the ruling CPDM party, that has not attracted the political interest of many parties. Douala and Yaounde host most of the legalized political parties. Yaounde, the capital city, has the main offices of 51 political parties while Douala has 35 of the 110 parties. In terms of provincial distribution, the South West and Littoral seems to have a greater city representation. In the South West six political parties have offices in Buea, Limbe, Kumba and Muyuka while the Littoral province has 38 political parties based in Douala, Edea, Mbanga, Eseka. The Centre province with the greatest number of political parties has only Yaounde (51) and Bafia (1) serving as party headquarters. Although there are only four parties based in the Western provincial town of Bafoussam, the majority of parties based in

Douala are of Bamileke origin. However, the city of Douala has a strong Bamileke presence (about 45% of the urban population). The emergence of the Bamileke component during the last council elections was clear evidence of their demographic dominance and strength in that city and the threat it provides to the so-called “indigenes”.

Political parties are distributed in the following towns: Yaounde (51), Douala (35), Bafoussam (4), Bamenda (4), Buea (2), Ngaoundere (2), Garoua (2), Maroua (2), Kumba (2), Muyuka (1), Edea (1), Bafia (1), Limbe (1), Mbanga (1) and Eseka (1). When one looks at the geographic distribution of party head offices, several conclusions emerge. Firstly, there is a certain disequilibrium between the provinces. Most parties are concentrated in the Centre (52) and Littoral provinces (38). Secondly; political parties whose headquarters are based in small towns, tend to be logically the ethnic basis or origin of its founders. Such parties usually command and attract only an ethnic following. Thirdly, only parties whose headquarters are located in Yaounde and Douala tend to have a greater ethnic diversity. Of the 51 political parties based in Yaounde, 29 have been established by a political elite from the centre province, predominantly of the Beti ethnic group. The villages of the Centre Province enjoy a certain autonomy and their egalitarian or segmentary nature may theoretically explain the existence of political and ideological diversity. The nature of power in such societies is the lack of one command centre and the autonomy of each village community and the powerful role played by lineage and clan leaders. Fourthly, the 35 political parties based in Douala have a very strong Bamileke connotation. Thirteen of the 35 parties in Douala were established by political leaders from the West Province; only 7 parties are actually established by indigenes and 5 have been created by people from the Centre province.

A critical analysis of the ethnic origins of these parties show that more than half of the 110 parties have been established and managed by members of the Beti ethnic group of the Centre and South provinces. In the Centre province, there are 29 political parties created by the Beti elite (Eton, Ewondo, Bulu) and five in the Littoral province. The Beti ethnic groups have established 34 political parties and all of them are part of the so-called presidential majority. One gets the feeling that these small mushroom Beti parties were created to give the appearance and the impression that democracy was effective in Cameroon when in reality it was not. With the exception of PAL (Partie d'Alliance Liberale of Eton region, Monatele), the

political manoeuvres of the ruling party, the CPDM, became so evident during the council elections when none of these mushroom ethnic parties of the presidential majority ran for any council seats. The ruling party frustrated PAL during the election by making it impossible for it to win a single seat. PAL resigned from that majority.

Since their creation very few parties (SDF, UNDP, UDC, UPC and MDR) have succeeded in improving their national performance. But taking a critical analysis of the situation, it is easy to distinguish three major categories of political parties in Cameroon: ethnic, regional and national parties. Ethnic parties are those whose membership is predominantly based on the “tribe”. For example, the Parti de l’Alliance Libérale (PAL) and Union Sociale Camerounaise (USC) would fall into this first category. These, and many others have not extended their influence beyond the clan or the tribe of their founders. Regional parties are those whose memberships is drawn from one or two provinces and attracts a large following beyond the ethnic niche. Their political focus is the consolidation of their presence within certain regions, in the hopes that their ideology will gain national acceptability and slowly lead to a wider national coalition. Parties such are Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC), Union .des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) and Mouvement pour la Défense de la République (MDR). Finally, National political parties are those that have a significant presence in at least five provinces and have performed well in both legislative, presidential and municipal elections. There are only three parties that have emerge as national parties, namely Cameroon People Democratic Movement (CPDM), the Social Democratic Front (SDF) , and the National Union ,for Development and Progress (NUDP). Parties of a national character have come a long way. The CPDM party, once the only party, commanded a nominal respect of many. Its failure to democratize earlier instead of resisting, has cost the CPDM, its militants and public confidence. By procrastinating and acting always as a fire brigade, the CPDM party lost its grip on the whole electorate, Again, its human rights abuses, its tacit approval of official corruption, the falling standards of living, its inability to fight increased unemployment and its drastic reduction of salaries of civil servants, opened the way for the emergence of parties prepared to fight these ills. If the CPDM party was smart, vigilant and proactive in its political action, it would have maintained a better image of itself but on the contrary, it proved not read the signs of the wall nor interpret the signs of times. The opposition political parties

capitalized on these weakness and made significant gains. The first party to seize the opportunity and publicly call for the democratization of national life, the promotion of good governance and fight against corruption, was the Social Democratic Front (SDF).

Established in Bamenda on May 26, 1990, the SDF has succeeded to compete successfully with the once one-party, the CPDM, for national coverage. Its strength beyond the regional framework lies in its capacity to mobilize national sentiments and its great courage to withstand destabilization mechanics of a desperate ruling party. Created and launched long before the December 1990 decree permitting free associations and the establishment of political parties, SDF was able to capture national feelings, sentiments and the desire for meaningful change. Many pro-government political observers⁶ tried to portray the SDF as a regional and separatists Anglophone party but they were later impressed with the performance of its leadership during the presidential elections of 1992. Even President Paul Biya's ten years in office (1982-1992) could only guarantee him a less than 36% of the total votes cast as opposed to a similar score register by John Fru Ndi, a novice in politics and a courageous leader of millions of Cameroonians thirsty for change.

During the presidential elections of 1992, John Fru Ndi was declared the loser by the Supreme Court, while acknowledging massive irregularities and its incapacity to deal with such fraudulent electoral malpractice. Fru Ndi's declared 35% of the national voters count against Biya's 37% made him a hero and a serious challenge for any future elections. Even though the Supreme Court declared the loser winner, the ruling party has systematically tried to give an ethnic and regional colouring and connotation to the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Its leader has been cast as an Anglophone chieftain, the head of a new Anglophone tribe in Cameroon; his electorate has often been described as mainly from the West, North-West, South-West and Littoral provinces. Everything has been done to frustrate SDF's influence in other provinces. The ruling party, despite its official public statements that political parties can hold rallies anywhere, has encouraged both local administrative officers and political party leaders, not to allow the SDF to make any foothold in predominantly Beti towns, under the pretext of the law. The 1996 council elections offer concrete examples. The SDF submitted lists of candidates for 243 councils out of the 334 councils throughout the national territory. The Ministry of Territorial Administration

(MINAT) nullified more than 143 SDF lists. Even when SDF won councils in Yaounde, the Centre province, again MINAT nullified them. Such political manoeuvres simply show the bad faith of a regime that sings the palms of unity but actively promotes hatred, disintegration and ethnic violence as long as these enhances its grip on power. The attempt on the life of John Fru Ndi by national security forces, in front of the prime minister's office and in the presence of some members of the diplomatic corps was adequate proof of a desperate ruling party to silence the voice of reasons and difference.

In conclusion, there is nothing wrong belonging to an ethnic group but when that belonging is used in a negative sense, then it destroys the very soul of inter-cultural dialogue and conviviality. In political terms no region or ethnic groups should be considered or made to believe that it is a monopoly of a political party. Attempts to give political parties regional and ethnic connotation does not augur well with the principle and policy of forging a united, stable and strong nation of a vast ethnic diversity.

The Logic And The Ideological Risks

The current political stalemate in Cameroon has led many scholars to hypothesise in a variety of ways. The correlation between ethnicity and party politics has been the subject of scholarly debates. Within the Cameroon context examining the relationship between political parties and ethnicity may throw light on the validity of the principle that ethnicity plays a fundamental role in determining ideological choices. How do political leaders use the ethnic internal logic as a consolidating principle for political survival? John Fru Ndi has been heard addressing crowds in the North West provinces saying "Biya hates the Bamenda man. He hates the Anglophones". How many stereotypical characterizations of John Fru Ndi can be heard on radio programs directed at a Beti audience saying that John Fru Ndi "cuts off the sexual parts of men"⁷. That he will take away everything from the Beti if he becomes president. That Anglophones are enemies in the house. Using such negative stereotypes to build ethnic solidarity for political ends always pays negatively in the end.

Within the framework of our present discourse, it is difficult to explain or justify the participation of ethnic groups in politics on the basis of ethnicity. But one thing is certain that ethnicity is not used all the time. It is true that there are over 15 political parties established and managed by a

Bamileke elite but the Bamileke electorate seems to vote for parties whose leaders are not of Bamileke origin. Here, the party that best represents the Bamileke aspirations gets their votes. The behaviour of the electorate during the presidential elections of October 11, 1996 demonstrate that SDF was the party that stands for the rights of the people in the so-called “grand west”. The importance of the correlation between social and ethnic origin of party leaders has strong implications. Looking at the results of the presidential elections of 1992, one remark ought to be made. No matter what regions one considers, voters preferred candidates closer to home. The candidates won in their home village with an absolute or comfortable majority, then in their province and then in the provinces and regions with close cultural and linguistic affinities.

In order to bring this reality home, the analysis of the official election results of October 1992 of the first three candidates illustrates this principle very clearly. Biya won conformably in the South, Centre and East provinces while John Fru Ndi won with absolutely majority in the North-West, South-West and West provinces. His performance was significantly important for a political novice. Bello Bouba Maigari swept the North and Adamawa provinces (see table below). Demographically, the South province is the least populated province, and the most represented at all levels of the national life (government, military and control of major state corporations). The Far-North provinces, the most populated has been the political battleground for political parties. It control is important for survival in any national elections.

a) Candidate: Paul Biya (Province of Origin: South)

Electoral areas	Votes counted
South Province	94,82
Centre Province	71,63
East Province	68,78
Far North Province	47,65
Dia and Lobo Division	99,98

b) Candidate: John Fru Ndi, (Province of origin: North-West)

Electoral areas	Votes counted
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North-West Province	86,30
South-West Province	51,78
West Province	67,78
Littoral Province	67,60

c) Candidate: Bello Bouba Maigari (Province of origin: North)

Electoral Areas	Votes Counted (%)
North Province	50.42
Adamawa Province	64.04
Benoue Division	60.00

The constitution of ethnic blocks around ideological schemes, is the drama or tragedy of political pluralism in Cameroon. The survival of military regimes and the one-party system in Africa, depended less on the support of people, since the party's effective control was through the army and police (Conac, 1993:17). In a democratic set-up where people are fundamentally the source of power, any attempts to manipulate them will leads to democratic violence and unpleasant consequences. In true democracy, people are free to express their discontent and demonstrate against despotic and arrogant leaders. But this has not been the case in many African countries. Resort to organized violence to silence the people is common in Africa today. A free and fair process in the transfer of political powers from the people to new leaders is the very virtue on which true democracies are built. Only a despot or entrenched barons of a one-party system can ignore such principle without bearing the consequences of their actions.

Conscious of the importance of the voice of the people in the conquest of power, political leaders seek primarily the *quintus* and the patronage of their ethnic "brothers" before seeking the support of their "allogene" sisters. On the other hand, the experience of two decades of political monolithism has given the people the impression that power is first of all the property of certain ethnic groups from whom its political leaders are selected. What right has the Fulbe ethnic group or a Beti ethnic group to aspire to a leadership position in this country? Are other ethnic groups, indeed, slaves and servants of the predestined ethnic groups? The prime ministers of Cameroon have either been Beti (Eton, Bulu, Ewondo) or Fulbe⁸. These two ethnic groups

have provided the two heads of states. Since the beginning of the democratic process, frequent reference has been made to the South-North Alliance which has permitted these two ethnic groups to control the political life of this nation. It is now evident that power is first of all the consolidation of ethnic ties and the strengthening of existing alliances between human groups with a common goal and objective.

The personalisation of power yesterday and today by ethnic and ideological leaders (Prouzet, 1974: 42) and its arrogation of such powers by members of an ethnic group or family dramatises and ridicules the whole democratic process. It is common to observe that a wife, son or relatives of a political leader would behave as if they were the extension of the office. For example, the cook working in the Presidency of the Republic behaves as if he was the president of all cooks. Such representations are internalized by the often haughty, arrogant, extravagant, unrespectful and scornful behaviour of those related to the powers that be (friends, classmates, sisters and brothers, etc) or those who circulate in the corridors of power. In their daily social relations, they look and treat their neighbours with a certain amount of contempt and arrogance. Such behaviours and attitudes can only inspire the electorate to vote against candidates of such relatives.

For many citizens, the exercise of the right to vote, is required as an expression of ethnic solidarity and above all social security when the vote is cast for ethnic political leader. If their “son” comes to power, it is they who are also in power. They can walk with their heads high and say to whoever wants to hear that they (Beti, Bamileke, Fulbe, Bassa, Douala, Kom, etc) are in command in the country, province, division, service, office, ministry ... This psycho-social behaviour is well known in the public service and to a lesser degree in the Cameroon private sector.

Within the present political context of Cameroon, three major political confessions seems to exist. These tend to represent and symbolize the will of a coalition of different ethnic groups seeking to maintain themselves in power or seeking the conquest of power. Firstly, there is the presidential majority made up of the CPDM party and small insignificant parties, mostly from the Centre and South provinces, and whose leadership is predominantly Beti or Bulu, the ethnic group of the president of the CPDM party. A sizable percentage of the members of the central committee of the CPDM come from the Beti ethnic group. Even the control of critical ministries and public institutions is in the hands of the Beti group (defence, interior, big

corporations, etc). The attempts by the President Ahidjo to achieve regional balance and national unity at all levels seems today to be a child's play.

The political advantage of the CPDM party inherited from the Cameroon National Union (CNU) established by Ahmadou Ahidjo, have been destroyed by the ethnic factor. Having inherited a strong economy and a viable civil service, the barons of the party slowly and gradually refused to make gains from a consolidated past by refusing to give democracy a chance. Corruption, nepotism, clientelism and other vices became so entrenched in its leadership that democracy was seen by them as a mechanism of exposing their failures and exacting a price.

Secondly, within the political context, a coalition, "Union for Change", made up of the SDF party and other opposition parties, constituted the most serious challenge to the CPDM ruling elite. The leaders of this coalition are largely from the West, North-West, South-West and Littoral provinces. This political alliance became known as the parties of the Great West. Since the big West is dominated by Bamilekes and Anglophones, they were characterized as small groups of disgruntled individuals that represented nobody but themselves. As we have seen earlier, SDF, the leading party among those fighting for meaningful change, has shown its capacity to transform itself into a national party enjoying a wide national respectability.

Finally, the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) emerged as the third political force in Cameroon. Seen as a party of the "Nordists" it draws its inspiration from the good old days of Ahidjo. It still has a strong Fulbe following and the absence of a strong Kirdi membership, goes back to a long-standing historical ethnic animosity and antagonism that separates Fulbes from the Kirdis. This ethnic animosity has become the consolidating principle of the MDR (Democratic Movement for the Republic), established by Dakole Daissala, a member of the Toupouri ethnic group that was, terrorized and islamized the Fulbe overlords.

On the whole the plurality of political ideologies, the prestige of power and the dividends generated by the exercise of it, are at the basis of ethnic battles around ballot boxes. The formation of antagonistic ethnic blocks ready to engage in self-destruction around pools of governance show without doubt that something has to be done to save national unity and integration philosophy from total collapse. Furthermore, political pluralism as lived and practised by the people and as managed by the governing elite today, is effectively in social danger. The Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda and Burundi

situation has had full expression in the Choa Arabs/Kotoko conflict in the Far North of Cameroon. We have witnessed since 1989, as history recounts in 1956, the violent ethnic battles between Bamileke and Bulu in Sangmelima and Ebolowa (Le Vine, 1964: 64; Fogui, 1990: 56-57). Despite the destructive nature of these conflicts, those who are responsible for public order have turned a deaf ear to this. But they are quick to punish the Anglophones and Bamileke people for venting their anger. Cameroon has been brought to the brink of civil war several times by both the governed and the governors, by leaders and the led, by rulers and the ruled. Why can such situations be avoided for the interest of the common good and good governance.

Conclusion

The Cameroon legislator has not treated the problem of national integration with seriousness. The law is very ambiguous and treats ethnic diversity with a certain amount of lightness. For a complex issue as national integration, very few constitutional precautions have been provided to respond to the social demands of pluralism. In fact, the law (No.90-56 of December 1990) on the creation of political parties is too liberal and constitutes a threat to the social peace and a real impediment to the effective realization of national integration. Taking into consideration the ethnic diversity of Cameroon and the fragility of the present national construct and ethnic conviviality, one would have expected from the legislator, a law allowing few parties to exist and operate. What we have all seen since 1990, is that the law has permitted the creation of ethnic parties, and the destruction of a once common national ethos in the process of formation. Today, there are more than 120 political parties competing for members among the over 200 Cameroon ethnic groups. The policy of divide and rule seems to have been in the mind of the legislator when the law of 1990 was promulgated. One has to prove the contrary.

The present situation leads us to the following questions: Is political pluralism (over 120 political parties) a symbol of true democracy? Is the limitation of political pluralism not a better mechanism or strategy for consolidating national unity and integration? The answer to the first question is in the negative. The multiplication of political parties in Cameroon has destroyed the national integration construct (Atangana Zang, 1960: 682-683; Prouzet, 1974: 42; Lavroff, 1978: 119). Within this context, the spirit of

building a strong, united and stable nation-state is simply absent. The destructive nature of ethnicity can only be fully expressed in a situation where parties are constituted on an ethnic base. Brandishing the numbers of political parties, as a sign of the success of the democratic process, is deceitful, and a slow and deliberate preparation of another Rwanda or Burundi. The tribalisation of politics is a very dangerous thing to play with. Its consequences can be disastrous and devastating and can lead to social ethnic tension of unimaginable proportions. The “de-tribalisation” of politics must begin with a deep conviction that different ethnic groups are just part of national mosaic.

Several models exist that explain how ethnicity could be harnessed successfully for nation building. The Yugoslavian model has been disastrous. After many years of Tito’s despotic rule, ethnic Yugoslavia crumpled like a pack of cards. Ahidjo’s model which emphasized on regional balance, advocated a policy which, on paper treated and promoted all the regions of the country on an equal footing. This policy was extended to administrative appointments and the distribution of development infrastructure. Again, he used a very repressive measure to achieve the relative stability the nation enjoyed. The Swiss model calls for the respect of all cultures and their rightful place within the national framework. The presidency is rotational among the ethnic components of the Swiss nation; its regional assemblies take care of the cultural idiosyncratic differences, and there is strict respect of individual cultures and ideals. Unless Cameroonians come to the table of negotiation with open minds and hearts to define the fundamental laws of this country in a peaceful way, any attempt to impose will always lead to disastrous consequences. Learning from the success story of Switzerland may be the beginning of wisdom.

Notes

1. Newly appointed public officials and civil servants build castles in the capital city as well as in the home villages. The public wonders where such funds come from if not embezzlement and corruption. No minister in the present and past Biya government is not guilty of misuse of public fund. Banks are so broke that they cannot afford the luxury of giving loans whose recovery potential is zero.

2. The North-West and Western provinces are SDF strongholds and the Adamawa and Northern provinces are traditionally UNDP “fiefs”. In these areas, the ruling party has had a hard time recovering from humiliating defeats.

3. By 1966 Ahidjo had succeeded to neutralise and emerged as the uncontested ruler of French Cameroon, all the political forces (Socialists party of Andre Marie Mbida, Charles Assale’s party, and many others). Ahidjo had Andre Mbida jailed and UPC party outlawed and most of its leaders assassinated. The flame of democracy was still burning in Anglophone Cameroon, and Ahidjo used democratic negotiation not force to neutralise them.

4. CRATRE: Cercle de Reflexion et d’Action pour le Triomphe du Renouveau.

5. Messenger Newspaper reported on its front page a private conversation during which Professor Joseph Owona, then Secretary General at the Presidency, is said to have made.

6. The French Ambassador, Mr. Omnes was reported to have advised the French government not to take seriously, the Social Democratic Front, considering it a small group of English speaking separatist. It was not until the elections of October 1992 that the French Government realised the true picture of the SDF.

7. While visiting some pygmy camps some 150 km from Kribi, pygmies told me that they had heard of Fru Ndi and that he was a very bad man, out to destroy the sexuality of Cameroonians by cutting off their penises (communication 1995).

8. The Ministers of Cameroon have been Andre Marie Mbida (Eton), Charles Assale (Bulu), Tsoungui (Ewondo), Paul Biya (Bulu), Bello Bouba Maigari (Fulbe), Issa Hayatou (Fulbe), Achidi Achu (said to have Bamileke origin); and the Fulbe and the BULU ethnic groups have provided heads of states for Cameroon.

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Elites Et Intégration Nationale Au Cameroun Sous Le Régime Du Renouveau

Kengne Fodouop

Introduction

De son accession à l'indépendance le 1er janvier 1960 à l'avènement du Régime du Renouveau le 6 novembre 1982, le Cameroun a été gouverné sur la base d'une politique centraliste à parti unique dans une perspective multirégionale ou multiethnique. Ainsi, pour canaliser les tensions et les inégalités sociales au niveau régional, le Pouvoir d'alors s'est servi de personnalités influentes à qui il accordait de larges privilèges (politiques et financiers) et qui devaient en échange, défendre sa cause auprès des groupes ethniques auxquels ils appartenaient. Cette politique unique en Afrique, permit de maintenir pendant 22 ans, ce pays dans une relative cohésion sociale au prix de nombreuses privations individuelles et collectives.

Depuis le 6 novembre 1982 et plus encore depuis le mois de mars 1990, le Cameroun subit de profondes mutations dans les domaines politique, social et économique qui ont failli à certains moments, paralyser ses institutions et compromettre sa paix sociale. Pour atténuer les effets pervers de ces mutations, réduire les inégalités régionales de développement et au-delà réaliser l'intégration nationale, le Nouveau Régime fait de plus en plus appel à la générosité des élites. Cependant, cette stratégie, ne peut lui permettre de réaliser pleinement un tel objectif.

La Justification De La Politique D'intégration Nationale

Depuis son avènement le 6 novembre 1982 et surtout depuis la fin de l'année 1990, le régime du Renouveau du Président Paul BIYA, cherche à réduire les inégalités sociales et économiques entre les différentes régions du Cameroun et à conduire celles-ci au même niveau de développement, objectif à la réalisation duquel le régime précédent s'était déjà employé. Son engagement dans cette politique d'intégration nationale est incontestablement

lie aux profondes mutations politiques sociales et économiques intervenues récemment dans le pays.

La première remonte au début de l'année 1984 avec le déclenchement de la crise économique la plus grave que le Cameroun ait jamais connue. Cette crise y a entraîné, un effondrement des exportations et importations,¹⁰⁵ la faillite de plusieurs entreprises économiques¹⁰⁶, la baisse du chiffre d'affaires de plusieurs autres, le gel par l'Etat du recrutement de personnel dans la Fonction publique, la suppression des avantages en nature aux fonctionnaires, la réduction des salaires et le licenciement massif d'employés surtout dans le secteur privé moderne.

En outre, la mise en application des Programmes d'Ajustements Structurels (PAS) à l'initiative du Fonds Monétaire International à partir du 1er juillet 1987, a contribué à y aggraver la situation. En effet, la gravité de la crise économique a, dès le courant de l'année 1986 conduit le Gouvernement à concevoir sous la houlette du Fonds Monétaire International, une politique de gestion rationnelle des secteurs public et parapublic, qui fut approuvée par le FMI en mars 1981 dans le cadre d'un premier PAS, lequel fut suivi en décembre 1990 par la négociation d'un deuxième PAS.

Le Programme d'Ajustement structurel adopté par le Gouvernement camerounais, est en fait un ensemble de mesures de nature strictement économique. Cette politique visait entre autres objectifs à rétablir dans le pays, à moyen terme, un taux de croissance positif et à améliorer les indicateurs sociaux les plus essentiels ainsi que les conditions de vie des Camerounais. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, les mesures mises en avant par les PAS considérés ici, comprennent, la stabilisation des finances publiques, la rationalisation de la gestion des secteurs public et parapublic et l'assainissement du système bancaire et financier.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Selon le Ministère du Commerce et du développement Industriel, le volume des exportations du Cameroun a diminué de 42,6 % entre 1983 et 1994 et celui des importations de 59,1 % dans la même période

¹⁰⁶ D'après le SYNDUSTRICAM 83 entreprises industrielles représentant 33,7 % des firmes membres de ce Syndicat ont cessé leur activité entre fin 1986 et fin 1993.

¹⁰⁷ MINPAT. Yaoundé. Déclaration de stratégie de développement et de relance économique.

La mise en œuvre de ces mesures a très tôt suscite une nouvelle vague de licenciement de travailleurs encore plus massive que la précédente, dans l'industrie, les services privés et les secteurs public et parapublic, (et donc une accentuation encore plus forte du nombre de sans-emploi). Ainsi, près de 20 000 personnes ont perdu leur emploi dans les secteurs public et parapublic entre juillet 1987 et décembre 1994; il s'agit la d'un bilan provisoire qui ne tient pas compte des Fonctionnaires et Agents de l'Etat que le Gouvernement a décidé récemment de renvoyer dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre de sa politique de réhabilitation des entreprises publiques. Dans le secteur prive, l'impact de la crise économique et surtout de la mise en application des PAS a été le plus durement ressenti, puisque près de 40 000 personnes ont été licenciées dans l'industrie manufacturière et les services modernes privés, représentant 12 % des employés du secteur moderne non agricole.

D'autre part, la mise en application des mesures des PAS a provoqué une forte diminution du volume de la production et des échanges dans des provinces à fort dynamisme économique comme le Littoral, l'Ouest, le Centre et le Sud-Ouest et une hausse considérable des prix d'achat des denrées alimentaires et des produits manufactures dans celles de l'Adamaoua, de l'Est, du Nord, de l'Extrême-Nord et du Sud; enfin, en contraignant l'Etat à se désengager de plusieurs entreprises économiques, elle a réduit de nombreux fonctionnaires au chômage technique et prive une foule d'administrations de leur principale source d'approvisionnement en matériel de travail.

A partir de mars 1990, profitant du vent de démocratisation qui secouait alors très fortement l'Afrique sub-saharienne, les Camerounais, du moins la majorité d'entre eux, ont exigé du Pouvoir monopartiste de l'époque, qu'il instaure la démocratie, le pluralisme politique et les libertés individuelles dans le pays. Exprimée à travers la presse, les manifestations de rue et les correspondances au Chef de l'Etat, cette exigence a conduit le Régime du Renouveau à promulguer en décembre 1990, des lois qui consacrent la

démocratisation de la vie politique, et instaurent à la fois le multipartisme et les libertés individuelles.¹⁰⁸

Et ce n'est pas tout. Au lendemain des élections présidentielles pluralistes d'octobre 1992, le Cameroun a essuyé l'une des vagues de protestation sociales les plus violentes et les plus éprouvantes qu'ait eu à connaître un pays d'Afrique sub-saharienne depuis que le vent de la démocratisation et de la revendication pluraliste secouent le continent. Près de 7 mois d'opération "Villes Mortes" (désobéissance civile, manifestations de rue, refus de s'acquitter de l'impôt, grèves sporadiques, boycott des activités administratives) ont affaibli l'économie, détruit une partie notable de l'appareil productif, désorganisé les réseaux de commercialisation et d'échange, perturbe le déroulement de l'enseignement et aggrave la crise financière de l'Etat. Enfin, depuis les élections présidentielles d'octobre 1992, une partie du peuple camerounais dont plusieurs leaders des partis politiques d'opposition exige du Pouvoir qu'il décentralise l'administration du pays en accordant une autonomie de décision et de gestion aux provinces existantes ou crée de nouvelles provinces, dotées d'une véritable autonomie administrative. Certains réclament même le retour du pays au système de Gouvernement fédéral qu'il connut entre octobre 1961 et mai 1972.

Les difficultés économiques et les revendications sociopolitiques évoquées ci-dessus ne pouvaient laisser le Pouvoir en place indifférent pendant longtemps; elles l'ont conduit à partir de la fin de 1990 à renforcer davantage la mise en œuvre de la politique d'intégration nationale. Celle-ci a pour objectifs majeurs de canaliser les tensions sociales et les disparités régionales de développement et au-delà de redresser l'image de marque de l'Etat tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur des frontières nationales. Le succès d'une telle politique passe aussi bien par une bonne explication des objectifs visés aux populations que par une répartition rationnelle des productions nationales entre les différentes provinces et par une couverture appropriée de ces provinces en routes, ponts, établissements scolaires et médicaux et bâtiments administratifs. Mais étant donné que leur mise en œuvre dépassé

¹⁰⁸ SOPECAM. Lois et règlements de la République du Cameroun. Yaoundé, SOPECAM. 1992

largement les compétences et les possibilités financières actuelles de l'Etat, celui-ci en confie une grande partie aux élites.

Les Elites, Vecteur De La Concrétisation De La Politique D'intégration Nationale

Au Cameroun, depuis une dizaine d'années les élites constituent un vecteur non négligeable de la concrétisation de la politique d'intégration nationale du Régime du Renouveau. En effet, a l'instigation de celui-ci, elles y concourent largement a l'encadrement et a l'animation politique des populations et a la dotation des régions en équipements collectifs modernes. Mais qui sont ces élites ? La clarification de cette appellation est d'autant plus nécessaire ici, qu'il existe au Cameroun et ailleurs, plusieurs types d'élites.

Etymologiquement, le terme d'élite" désigne un ou plusieurs groupes minoritaires d'une société donnée a un moment donne de son histoire et désignés comme tel parce qu'ils possèdent une prééminence qu'ils se donnent ou qu'on leur reconnait. En règle générale, chaque société, a sa propre élite et a l'échelle des pays, il existe souvent plusieurs types d'élites fondés sur la coutume, la domination politique, les compétences intellectuelles et techniques ou la puissance économique: ainsi, la société romaine ancienne avait ses nobles, la société occidentale médiévale ses suzerains et l'URSS d'avant la Perestroïka sa nomenklatura; la société haoussa de l'Afrique soudano-sahélienne actuelle a ses Maigida ou ses Alhaji, le Togo a ses dirigeants politiques et ses Nana-Benz, la Fédération américaine a ses Gouverneurs d'Etat, ses ingénieurs et savants et ses milliardaires, le Zaïre sa junta militaire et ses intellectuels chrétiens. Au Cameroun même, on distingue aujourd'hui six principaux types d'élites: les élites traditionnelles constituées de lamidos et de chefs de 1er degré, les élites politiques qui regroupent les leaders de partis, les ministres, les députés et les haut fonctionnaires de l'Administration centrale, les élites intellectuelles qui rassemblent les titulaires de diplômes de valeur internationale et les artistes de tous bords, les élites militaires qui comprennent les membres du haut commandement des forces de l'ordre, les élites religieuses avec les évêques, archevêques et dignitaires des autres religions révélées et les élites économiques qui réunissent les hommes d'affaires, les directeurs généraux d'entreprises publiques et privées et les membres des professions libérales comme les médecins, les notaires, les avocats et les experts-comptables. Trois d'entre eux, les élites traditionnelles,

les élites politiques et les élites économiques y aident fortement le Pouvoir en place à traduire dans les faits sa politique d'intégration nationale.

A l'initiative de ce Pouvoir, elles y concourent d'abord à l'encadrement et à l'animation politique des groupes ethniques dont elles sont issues. Ainsi, elles se chargent de leur communiquer les décisions et instructions venant du Pouvoir et de leur expliquer à la fois sa philosophie politique et son projet de société; qu'elles résident en ville ou à la campagne, elles coordonnent les préparatifs des visites des autorités administratives dans leur arrondissement ou village d'origine; en période électorale, elles y soutiennent et financent même la campagne des candidats du Pouvoir en place; dans le cadre des élections municipales ou législatives, elles y conduisent le plus souvent la liste du parti au pouvoir. Le moins qu'on puisse dire est que l'action de ces élites n'est pas désintéressée, autrement dit, elle n'est pas bénévole. En effet, nombre d'entre elles agissent ainsi parce qu'elles ne peuvent pas faire autrement dans le contexte actuel, si elles veulent réussir dans les affaires ou dans la politique. Autrement dit, elles agissent ainsi, pour exprimer leur reconnaissance à l'égard d'un Pouvoir qui en a fait soit des chefs traditionnels soit des personnalités politiques de premier plan ou qui les a aidés à réussir dans les affaires en leur accordant des avantages financiers considérables.

En second lieu, les élites s'emploient à l'initiative du Pouvoir en place à réaliser des équipements collectifs modernes dans leur arrondissement ou village d'origine. Avant l'avènement du Renouveau, le régime précédent avait déjà lancé un appel à l'initiative des élites urbaines en les invitant vers le milieu des années 1970 à participer activement au développement disons modernisation de leur région d'origine, afin de la placer au même niveau de vie que les autres. Depuis cette date et plus encore depuis une dizaine d'années et ce malgré la crise, les citoyens fortunés, hommes d'affaires, cadres privés et haut fonctionnaires de l'administration rivalisent entre eux pour doter leur région ou village d'origine de villas, routes, ponts, établissements scolaires et médicaux, points d'eau potable, groupes électrogènes. Bâtiments administratifs et exploitations agricoles modernes. En 1987, le chef de file du nouveau régime, le Président Paul BIYA s'est engagé en personne dans l'entreprise en créant une grande ferme à Mvomeka, son village natal.

Certains des apports évoqués ci-dessus relèvent de l'initiative individuelle (cas des villas, des groupes électrogènes ou d'une partie des points d'eau potable), mais les plus nombreux sont mis en place de façon collective par des citoyens qui agissent à travers des associations regroupant dans les villes

du pays, les ressortissants d'une même ethnie, d'un même arrondissement ou d'un même village. Les intéressés les financent avec soit des économies personnelles qu'ils ont mobilisées pendant longtemps dans des tontines ou dans un compte bancaire, soit des prêts bancaires soit encore des cotisations qu'ils versent dans le cadre des associations ethniques ou villageoises pour réaliser un équipement d'intérêt collectif (une route, un pont, une école, un lycée ou un foyer culturel) dans leur arrondissement d'origine. Ceux d'entre eux qui occupent de hautes fonctions politiques et administratives à l'instar des ministres, des députés et des directeurs généraux d'entreprises publiques mobilisent l'ensemble de leurs relations pour obtenir du Gouvernement, la construction de routes, de collèges d'enseignement secondaires, de dispensaires ou de points de distribution d'eau potable dans leur région d'origine; en outre, ils font des démarches auprès des autorités publiques compétentes afin qu'elles érigent leur arrondissement ou village d'origine en district, en sous-préfecture ou en préfecture. Par ces diverses actions, les personnalités considérées montrent leur capacité à mobiliser les institutions étatiques et à les mettre au service de leur communauté. Tantôt, usant de leur position dominante dans le Gouvernement, ils détournent au profit de leur région ou village d'origine, des investissements publics initialement attribués à d'autres groupements. Tantôt, ils prélèvent sur le Trésor public, des fonds pour doter leur arrondissement ou village d'origine d'infrastructures sociales modernes. Ainsi, d'après les enquêtes de terrain, les trois-cinquièmes du réseau routier de la chefferie de Bandjoun dans la province de l'Ouest (138 km sur un total de 230 km) ont été réalisés par les élites urbaines et à la fin de 1994, les élites urbaines avaient financé en partie ou en totalité, la construction ou l'agrandissement de 408 établissements scolaires de campagne, soit 26,2 % de l'équipement scolaire rural du pays.

Les Elites, Facteur Influent de Développement Régional

Les analyses qui précèdent ainsi que de nombreux autres exemples rencontrent que les élites et surtout celles qui vivent et travaillent en ville, sont un facteur influent de développement régional. En effet, depuis près de trois décennies, les citadins fortunés autrement dit les élites urbaines contribuent largement par leur aide en espèces et en nature à l'élévation du niveau des campagnes du Cameroun qui se traduit dans le paysage rural des gros foyers migratoires comme le pays Bamileké la région des Grassfields, le

pays Eton ou le département du Diamare par l'amélioration de l'habitat et de l'habillement mais aussi une urbanisation et une occidentalisation poussée des modes de vie: consommation régulière du riz, du pain, du café et des produits lactés, prise des repas a des heures fixes, port du pantalon, de la veste, des jupes et de la perruque, maisons équipées de transistors, de téléviseurs et même de motos. Par la construction de résidences secondaires et de retraite dont certaines sont spacieuses et très luxueuses elles y jouent un rôle de premier plan dans la modernisation de l'habitat (95 % des maisons d'habitation rurales d'un cout supérieur à 5 millions de francs CFA ont été construites par elles)

Outre la réponse à la demande des pouvoirs publics dont nous avons longuement parlée plus haut, ces initiatives obéissent aussi à la volonté de leurs auteurs d'exprimer leur attachement à leur région d'origine, d'affirmer leur notoriété aux yeux de leurs concitoyens et de marquer leur civisme politique.

Les Limites d'une Politique d'intégration Nationale Axée Sur La Générosité Des Elites

Cependant, le Régime du Renouveau (il en serait de même de tout autre régime politique) ne peut pas parvenir à concrétiser toute sa politique d'intégration nationale en s'appuyant sur la seule générosité des élites. Il y au moins trois raisons a cela.

En premier leu, comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, les élites ne prennent souvent des initiatives qu'en faveur de leurs villages ou régions d'origine. Il en résulte que les terroirs n'ayant pas de vendables élites, c'est-a-dire de "grands" comme on les appelle vulgairement chez nous, sont de ce fait même défavorisés. Même les régions qui possèdent les élites ne sont pas complètement a l'abri des besoins dans la mesure où, comme indique plus haut, nombre de ces élites agissent surtout pour préserver leurs propres intérêts financiers et matériels. Par ailleurs, leurs actions ponctuelles et disparates ne s'intègrent pas nécessairement dans une politique globale de développement ou d'aménagement du territoire.

En outre, certaines élites considérées ici, qu'il s'agisse des chefs traditionnels, des hommes d'affaires ou des dignitaires politiques, œuvrent de façon peut-être inconsciente, a détruire la politique d'intégration nationale poursuivie par le Régime dont elles sont pourtant, les serviteurs. En effet, il

leur arrive souvent de contrarier les initiatives sociales ou économiques de leurs concitoyens dont les options politiques sont éloignées de celles du parti au pouvoir (qu'elles soutiennent) et d'exercer des violences physiques sur eux; il leur arrive aussi souvent de décourager toute initiative venue de l'extérieur de leur région d'origine qu'elles n'auraient pas approuvée à l'avance.

Enfin, au Cameroun, on ne peut pas concevoir une véritable politique de partage équitable des richesses nationales sans une forte implication de l'Etat. En effet, ici comme ailleurs, c'est à l'Etat qu'incombe les tâches prioritaires d'assurer le maintien de l'ordre et de la sécurité, mais aussi celles de réglementer et de réguler l'économie et de mettre en place les infrastructures et les services sociaux nécessaires, depuis les routes jusqu'aux crèches en passant par les voies terrées, les aéroports, les hôpitaux, les réseaux d'adduction d'eau, d'électricité, et de télécommunications, les établissements scolaires etc. Les élites n'ont ni les moyens financiers, ni la volonté, ni les compétences, encore moins la hauteur de vue nécessaires à leur réalisation intégrale.

Conclusion

Ainsi, en ces temps de crise économique aigue et de diminution drastique des ressources financières publiques et d'incertitudes politiques, le Régime du renouveau du Président Paul BIYA, essaie de mettre en œuvre une politique d'intégration nationale par l'intermédiaire des élites, dont il en fait à la fois ses interlocuteurs auprès des populations et des agents de développement économique et social de leurs terroirs d'origine. Mais dans un pays aussi vaste et aussi varié que le Cameroun, les initiatives des élites, si elles ne sont pas à négliger, ne sauraient constituer le moyen idéal de conduire toutes les régions au même niveau d'épanouissement social, culturel et économique. D'ailleurs comme nous l'avons souligné précédemment, la générosité des élites y a bien des limites.

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Decision-Making, Accessibility to Resources and National Integration of Women in Cameroon

Amin Rebecca M. Ntongho

Introduction and Background

Cameroon's population was estimated to be eleven million in 1987. Women do not only make up about 51 % of the population, they reproduce the whole population. A greater proportion of this population lives in rural areas since Cameroon is largely rural. About 7.5 millions of its inhabitants live in rural areas, of which about 4 millions are women (National Census, 1987). Women have been very active in development, both the urban and rural women, fighting all odds to take care of their responsibilities. They are prominent in the agricultural sector, producing about 90% of food crops, providing 86.6% of the labour force active in the food crop sector, and 89% of this labour force derives its income from food crop production (AOOCAD, 1990). They are also active in cash crop production which is mainly a male domain, contributing most of the labour force.

Women's activities do not only end here, women are also very active in the formal and informal sectors of the economy. They work as civil servants, work for private companies and also carry out informal business activities. They are, however, more in the informal sector especially in the sale of foodstuff, partly because it is easy to enter this line of business. Besides all this work done by women outside the home, they are also burdened with house chores. They go very far to fetch drinking water (especially in rural areas), and wood, process most of their food due to lack of machines, and take care of the children. This house work takes much of women's time which could be used for other activities that are restful or that will generate income. So most of women's income-generating activities do not generate much income as to alleviate their poverty level.

Despite all women's effort to improve their lives and their family as a whole, they are very absent in the decision-making process. Men do not

consider women as being equal to them. This equality between the sexes is a world-wide goal, set in 1975 and reaffirmed in 1985 at the end of the United Nations Decade for women. The Nairobi Forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women foresee the achievement of full equality by the year 2000. This is a very ambitious hope because to achieve equality is difficult and threatens social and economic relations which are based on inequality (The United Nations 1990). Women's role in the decision-making process is both in the micro and the macro level. That is beginning in their homes with their taking of some decisions on things like the number of children to have, the education of the children and their income-generating activities. The percentage of female headed households is low. So few women have absolute decision-making powers. Women's invisibility also moves up to invisibility in the decision-making process in their communities and in the country as a whole. This can be seen in the amount of public offices occupied by women, the number of women in the parliament and also those occupying important positions in political organizations.

Due to women's invisibility in the decision-making process, the resources that cater for the interest of women are very limited. Women are not in a position to get their needs and wants known to the decision-makers. The laws enacted in parliament do not necessarily consider all the parts of the country or the people in it. Since women are few there, they cannot vote the case of the women through, since men might not understand the position of women. Decisions on the necessary resources do not also consider women but what men observe casually. The provision of certain infrastructure also favour the urban areas than the rural areas where most of the population live. Even within the urban areas or the rural areas, there is a large discrepancy in the provision of development facilities. A casual observation of the infrastructure provision within the last 20 years shows that there is a marked difference between the different regions. More development facilities have been concentrated in certain provinces while other provinces have experienced little changes. These facilities have helped to improve women's standard of living in certain regions more than in others. Generally though, women's access to resources has been declining because women's contribution to the economy is undervalued and the constraints they face underestimated since women are invisible in national and regional statistics. The economic difficulties have also limited the amount of development facilities available.

The little resources available are scrambled upon so as to divert them to particular areas or regions of the country. This therefore favours those in the decision-making positions in the country who can lobby for resources. With the coming of multipartism, those who are affiliated to the ruling party, have the lobbying powers. Regionalism and Tribalism have also intensified in the country within the last ten years. The economic hardships and regionalism have given rise to many ethnic solidarity groups because people feel that it is through this that they can easily solve their individual and group problems. This group solidarity although good, lead to social exclusion of other groups and thus increases the spirit of regionalism and tribalism. Due to this, resource allocation is inefficient because it depends on the lobbying powers of people from different regions. Therefore, women of certain regions are disfavoured in the allocation of resources. With the poor access to productive resources, women's integration into the development process of the country is difficult.

Women in the Decision-Making Process

Women are invisible in the decision-making process. There are very few women as heads of households or in the council of elders, or as chiefs (Bryson, 1970). Her invisibility in the decision-making process, begins in her home, in her family, and extends to the community which could be tied to certain cultural values, to the national level where they are always absent in decision-making positions, be they elected or appointed.

In the Home

At home, the woman is always ignored when certain decisions concerning the family are to be made. In most male-headed households, the women's decision-making powers end at her planning on how to carry out her household chores and what crops to grow. They cannot decide on the number of children they want to have but what their husbands want although they mostly carry the burden of delivering the children and feeding them. If women had the right to choose how many children to have, it has been estimated that birth rates would drop by at least 1/3. They also do not take many decisions on the education of their children. Their husbands most of the time decide on whether the child should go to school and what type of

education the child should get. However, the economic hardship is pushing more decisionmaking powers to women. This is more common in the polygamous marriages where the husbands are unable to pay for all their children's school expenses and the women are taking the responsibility (Ntongho, 1991). Women most of the time cannot decide on what type of job to take and where to work. The men on the other hand always require women to move and follow them each time they get some job opportunities anywhere. A woman must ask permission from her husband before carrying out any economic activity (Howald and Wyckoff-Baired 1989). When she is refused permission there is nothing she can do about it. She cannot also seek ,for credit for any economic activity without telling the husband although her husband is not liable for any debts incurred. In some cases, husbands even frown at their wives saving money in both the formal and informal financial markets without their consent. So women sometimes do this secretly. Women always avoid discussing savings with their husbands for fear of their husbands knowing they have money and bothering them often about it.

Agriculture is what most women practice either just for subsistence or in addition to earning money. It is in this area that women have the greatest decision-making powers especially as concerns food crops. They do not own many cash crop farms partly because this is reserved for men and because it involves ownership of land. Traditionally, women do not own land. In the Ewondo area as well as in other areas, a widow does not even have total claim on her husband's land. This is because there is always a successor who inherits her own as well as her late husband's land. They only have rights to their fallow land which provide subsistence and security (Guyer, 1984). So women do not have powers to use land as they want and their access to land is limited. Due to the drop in incomes from cash crops (before devaluation of the CFA franc) which have been an area of male dominance, men's traditional dominance in decision-making in the household has weakened especially on financial matters. Women are able to get into other income generating activities when their main source of income is threatened even though they might be temporal activities. In Yaounde, on one of the sites studied by the World Bank, 92% of the economically active population were female. Women themselves declare that this change in role is very advantageous to them because it helps to empower women and also promotes innovation.

In the Community

African societies are generally paternalistic and hierarchical. This is opposed to the western way which places more emphasis on assertiveness, individual freedom and responsibility. At the community level women's decision-making powers are limited, since the men are always dominating them. The culture in most cases prevents both women and men from sitting and discussing community problems together. Since there are hardly any women in the council of elders or as chiefs, women do not take much part in the discussion of community issues. This also applies even to titled women in the villages. Women's lack of decision-making powers in the community can be seen from the number of women councillors and mayors. Some councils have no woman at all; the rest have a few. As of 1989, on the average there were 2.3 women per municipal council in Cameroon, 2.0 per rural municipal council and 3.9 per urban municipal council. The maximum number of women in a municipal council was 9. (MINASCOF, 1989). Presently there are only two female mayors and a few as deputy mayors.

At the National Level

In the world, less than five women are heads of government. However, in a few Western countries, women are playing an important role in politics, as heads of corporations, in the government and so on. In the USA, the 1992 elections saw an increase in the number of women in public offices. American women are gaining more political powers. Many are running for elected office, raising money for women candidates, voting and encouraging others to vote, getting appointed in to decision-making boards and commissions and lobbying for women's concerns and causes. (Topic, N^o, 201 date). According to the 1995 Human Development Report, attaining a critical 30% threshold as a minimum share of decision-making positions held by women at the national level should be the present goal for all countries. Only six countries in the world have crossed this threshold in parliamentary or cabinet representation. In the developing countries, women still constitute less than one-seventh of top administrators and managers (UNDP 1995).

In Cameroon, there are few women in decision-making positions and in the public sector. As mentioned earlier, there are few female councillors in our various communities. Women take little part in the political issues in the

country. Our present parliament has only 22 parliamentarians who are women out of the total of 180 parliamentarians. This is 12% representation for women in the parliament. Very few women occupy important positions in the political parties. In fact, it was noticed after the Bamenda Congress of the CPDM in 1985 that only five women were substantive members of the central committee out of thirty five members; no woman was a member of the National Political Bureau. (MINASCOF 1989). The situation is not any better now. Among the numerous political parties now existing, very few have the women's wing where hopefully women could discuss their problems together.

As concerns the non-elective positions, few women hold decision-making positions. Five years ago, there were five women in the rank of minister. Today there are only two out of the forty-four ministers. This is below the world's rate which is 6% (UNDP, 1995) as opposed to 4.5% for Cameroon. There are very few Secretary Generals, Ambassadors, General Managers of Parastatals, Directors of Institutions and Advisers at the Supreme Court. There is no woman as Divisional Officer and Military Commander. In cases where women have been made ministers, they have been put in specific ministries that are not considered strategic. No woman has ever been minister of Finance, Agriculture, Post and Telecommunication, Territorial Administration, or Public Service and State Control. This gives the impression that women are not capable of taking certain decisions that concern the whole country. Therefore, when women are not put in specific positions, this does not mean they are not qualified to occupy these positions but that there is a bias against them. This difference between women's capacity and the position they occupy, and their importance in society is due to their situation in decisionmaking places where the world's major social, economic, cultural and political orientations are discussed, examined, designed and adopted.

Accessibility to Resources and National Integration of Women

Due to low participation of Women in decision-making in the country, women's interests are not well catered for. No one can understand the problems of women except the women themselves. So women who are the poorest people in the country cannot easily get out of their poverty since the resources available to them are limited. The problem of women's poor access

to resources is a major cause of the slow rate of development among women and the country as a whole. Women's poor access to resources is even worse among the rural areas. Women lack access to land, education and training, health and other infrastructure that affect both men and women. The distribution of the nation's resources has changed considerably within the past twenty years. Many factors, in addition to the economic hardship in the country, have been responsible for that. Amongst other things, tribalism has intensified, group solidarity and multipartism have all had positive influences but have in many ways led to discrimination.

Economic Problems

Women have been slow at getting out of their economic hardship and developing themselves and their community because of their lack of resources. These resources if available are concentrated in the urban areas while the rural areas are left with very little. In the rural areas the most lacking resources are social services such as health and education. The urban areas have many health services and hospitals while the rural areas have few which are mostly lacking in personnel. The health facilities place more emphasis on curative care than on preventive care. (Amin, 1995) with the high cost of medicine, the poor cannot afford medical care. This hits women most because women in particular require preventive care, and they are who mostly pay for medical treatment for themselves and the children. There is also a lack of educational facilities in the country. Emphasis in Cameroon has been more on higher education and not on primary education that cater for a larger proportion of the population especially those in the rural areas. The few schools in rural areas do not have enough teachers. This leaves education in rural areas at the mercy of the children and their parents. The women carry this burden because the men are hardly at home to supervise the children's school work and the women who are at home are mostly illiterate. Besides health and educational facilities that are lacking, the economic infrastructure and facilities available to women are also lacking. Agriculture that is the main occupation of women, do not have supporting facilities. Since women does not own land traditionally, the land they beg or rent to grow crops cannot be used as they would have if they owned the land. So they are condemned to growing mostly food crops which are grown annually and which cannot generate much income. The government's policy has been concentrated on

cash crops, helping them with inputs and marketing. Due to lack of land and any real property, women cannot raise enough money to start good income-generating activities. There are few formal financial markets that could provide small loans to women in the urban areas, but the rural areas have none.

Regionalism and Tribalism

Within the last ten years, there has been much talk of tribalism and regionalism. The country has been socially divided into regions, following ethnic groupings and languages spoken. People are now commonly referred to as “Nordist” - from the three northern provinces, “Anglophone” - English speakers from the North West and South West Provinces, “Bami” - from the western province, “Beti”- from the Central and South provinces, (not forgetting people from the “11th province” that is somebody whose parents are originally from a region which speaks one language but who was born and educated in the region speaking the other language. Finally some regions are not referred to in any particular way.

With this division of people into specific groups, people are very conscious of the fact that they are different. This aspect of regionalism is not a totally new concept. During the reign of the last president, appointments seemed to have been made following people’s province or tribe. For example, if in a ministry the minister was French-speaking, the vice would be English speaking. In that way there was a kind of balancing of power. However, the present president does not seem to adopt this policy, maybe as an attempt to control this aspect of regionalism. This has instead worsened the talk of tribalism. Appointment into any office is listened to carefully to find out from which region and ethnic group the appointees belong. This has led to tension between the different regions and ethnic groups when it is realized that some regions are more favoured than others. This seems to also influence the allocation of resources within the different regions. The people in decision-making positions try to take facilities to their regions of origin and ignore the other areas. So areas with few people in decision-making positions get very few resources. Even foreign aids get diverted continuously to specific regions of the country. For example, women in some rural areas, have been taught different income generating activities by experts sent to their areas, while others have not had such opportunities.

Multipartism

With the coming of multiparty politics, there has been an improvement in democracy and the human rights situation in the country. Besides the division of the population into regions and tribes, the formation of many political parties has helped to divide the population even more. It has led to regions being divided into political influence groups, with those affiliated to the ruling party favoured in resource allocation and decision-making positions.

In recent years the dwindling resources have led to conflict and insecurity over resource so people rely on ethnic groups and extended families to build up their legitimacy and patronage. The state resources are thus scrambled upon. This can be seen from the frequent visits of cultural or regional groups to important members of the government such as the Prime Minister, to express their support, lay their complaints and express their needs. However, the development funds generally end up in the hands of a few leaders of the groups or some government officials who spend them on conspicuous consumption instead of productive investment which will benefit a number of people.

Group Solidarity

Group solidarity or “Safety Nets” are becoming common now. With the economic hardships, group solidarity is helping both men and women to improve on their well-being. This is more so with women who have formed cultural, social and economic groups. The most important solidarity groups are those formed for economic reasons. Women have formed many savings and loan associations which help them to solve part of their credit problems, in addition to performing cultural and social activities. These groups in Cameroon are commonly known as tontines. They exist both in the urban and rural areas. Women have also formed Common Initiative Groups and Co-operatives to produce, manage and market their produce. These have helped to increase the income of women in some areas. They help members to acquire certain goods, rights and services. Other forms of group solidarity are coming up now. These groups include tribal associations and unions, for the collective promotion of infrastructure provision and support in case of problems. Elite from the different regions, try to lobby. There is, however, a

limit to the lobbying in favour of those who are in strategic positions where they could effectively lobby for more facilities provide to help their rural population or those in need of the facilities provided.

Women have realized that by forming groups, they can collectively fight for things that, as individuals, they could not get. So group solidarity has been seen as a opportunity for women to integrate themselves in the decision-making process or in development. Nevertheless, group solidarity which is based on integration and inclusion, can lead at the same time to social exclusion especially in the case of the ethnic solidarity groups (Inack, Mbida and Bea 1995). Associations such as ex-students, regional, professional associations, by regrouping exclude others. The main concern among African countries is maintaining social balance and equity with groups. The interest of the local and ethnic communities is more important than the national goal set by the government.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Women in Cameroon who make up more than half of its population, play a major role in the development of the country. This is done through their role and responsibility in their homes and in their communities at large. However women's efforts are hampered by their low integration in the decision-making process, their poor access to resources and in general to their low integration in the development efforts of the country as a whole. Women's lack of decision making powers begin in their homes with their husbands taking decisions on issues that concern them and the children without telling them. It moves to the community level where they are not often included in the decisions or included in the council. And finally at the national level, women are not given decision-making positions in the government or other public offices. The exclusion of women in the decision-making positions, influences the resources available to women. Women are not included where decisions of what is required in the different regions are taken. Resources provided to different regions have been disproportionately distributed because of the economic crisis which has hit the country and because of the influence of regionalism, tribalism, multipartism, and group solidarity which although intended to bring positive results in the country, have helped to polarize the population. These factors have greatly prevented women in some regions from developing themselves through improvement

in their activities, be they social or economic. So women's rate of integration in the country's development has been slow. This goes against the president of the Republic's aspirations when he declared on the 4th May 1983 during his official visit to Garoua that : "The prosperity of each and everyone just like the economic growth of the nation, depends primarily on the work and effort of each and everyone" .(MINASCOF, 1989).

The improvement of the women's situation, rely partly on the women and partly on the society as a whole, women need a change in mentality. They should understand their environment in order to better accept and undergo changes. They should show interest and aspire to senior level positions, develop their leadership qualities and try to blend their traditional and noble duties with the demands of modern life. There is also a need for a change in the mentality of the Cameroonian man who should learn to admit, understand and tolerate the necessary changes in society. He should be more willing to cooperate with the woman so as to integrate her easily in decision-making circles and development projects. The elimination of the *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination is necessary for the integration of women in the country. Women need adequate improvement in their representation and there is need for equitable power sharing. According to the 1995 Human Development Report, attaining a critical 30% threshold as a minimum share of decision-making positions held by women at the national level should be the present goal of all countries. There is hope that the resolutions taken during the Beijing Conference will improve the situation of women worldwide.

Furthermore, the existing programs and policy agenda do not cater very well for the needs of women. The ministry of social and women's affairs, (MINASCOF) has tried to have women's centres and animators, but their activities and efforts have been constrained by its limitations in carrying out research on issues that affect women, integrate research findings and recommendations, and monitor and evaluate interventions. There is also a serious need for national unity and integration. This will eliminate regionalism, tribalism and ethnic solidarity aimed at excluding others from different ethnic groups.

And finally, to reduce tribal affiliation, a new affiliation can replace tribe. For example, ex-students unions could be encouraged. This could prevent the chaos and crisis that can arise as the trend of tribalism intensifies. Development programs and projects will be well distributed if everybody is

conscious of the fact that problems faced in one region are problems of the country and not just those of the region concerned.

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Women between Chiefs and the Law: Competition for Power and Land in North Cameroon

Adri Van Den Berg

Introduction: Regionalism in the Extreme North

The recent interest in regionalism (as exemplified in the theme of this conference) can be considered a reaction at the failure of the Cameroonian State to forge a national integration as a solution for regional imbalances. One of these regional imbalances can be found in the Extreme North, where people are struggling with socio-political inequalities and insecurities, which affect their daily life. I will discuss some of these inequalities here from the point of view of Giziga women in the town of Mindif, which is dominated by Fulbe politics.¹ Firstly, in North Cameroon, rapid economic and ecological changes are going on in the use of natural resources, which result in an increasing scarcity of land. Secondly, many political transformations have taken place in the region, which lead to power struggles, have a serious impact on the means of living of large Fulbe customary chiefs (the lamibe) and the State authorities. These two related factors, land and other bush products, have great difficulties in acquiring access to natural resources, as they are usually secondary right holders whose rights are getting restricted. Moreover, women's direct participation and representation in local politics is practically nil, so that they need to develop alternative strategies to get access to the local authorities.

This paper is focused on the question whether regionalism, or regional autonomy, can provide an adequate solution to the present situation of land insecurity of Giziga women in Mindif (Extreme North). Regionalism, in my opinion, presupposes a regional unity, a common interest among the people within that region. Such a communality will be particularly strong when it is expressed as a reaction against the failures of the national state. In this paper, I argue that the common basis for regionalism is lacking in the Extreme North, due to the scarcity of resources and the frequently rising power conflicts (ethnically and politico-economically based) among the political

authorities, and between the elite and the local population. In the first part of the paper, the historical and ecological backgrounds of the competition for power and resources are sketched. Particular attention will be paid to the local authorities who control the land, and with whom people have to deal in their struggle for land. In the second part of the paper, some strategies of Giziga women to acquire access to land within the local land tenure practices are discussed. In this respect, the possibility of registration of land is evaluated, as well as recent attempts to form women's associations.

Political Rivalry and Power Struggles In Mindif

Mindif is a small town in the Diamare plain and is considered a Fulbe stronghold, although it has a considerable "pagan" population who has been incorporated and partly assimilated into the Fulbe political organization. Mindif has approximately 5000-6000 inhabitants of whom half are Fulbe, 35% Giziga, and the rest other non-Fulbe. The village is both the capital of the lamidate of Mindif, ruled by the lamido, and the seat of the arrondissement, ruled by the sous-prefet. Both administrative units cover the same area of about 700 km².

In 1824, the Fulbe pastoralist elite established their own lamidate in Mindif after having conquered the Giziga population, who either fled to remote areas or were incorporated into the Fulbe political system. Although the Giziga originally had their own political and religious authorities. After the German, and later French colonization, the Fulbe chiefs were attributed a leading role in the colonial administration. This effectuated and strengthened the Fulbe hegemony over large parts of the population that had until then resisted or only nominally accepted Fulbe rule. In Fulbe strongholds like Mindif, the lamido became more powerful than he had ever been before, as the French legitimized and supported his customary authority over the local population, Fulbe and non-Fulbe alike, within the lamidate.' The establishment of Fulbe dominance was particularly felt with regard to the coerced cotton production and land allocation among the agricultural population.

The French colonial policy attributed a central role to the customary chiefs in its aim to encourage the agricultural development of the colony (*mise en valeur*). In order to stimulate the colonial trade in cash crops (initially groundnuts, later cotton), the local farmers were enforced by

economic pressure from the state (i.e., levying of heavy taxes, and coerced labour) to produce a larger surplus. The French administration - and later the independent state - made use of the chiefs to encourage the cotton production: they granted the chiefs a small commission over each kilo cotton produced. As a result, canton chiefs in the Diamare were often very coercive, violent, and abusive in making their subjects cultivate cotton. Farmers in the Kaele and Mindif regions remember lively “le baton du chef” when they preferred to cultivate millet instead of cotton (Beauvilain 1989: 406; see further Bikoi 1988: 84; Motaze 1990). This was a main reason of the migration current in the 1980’s to the Benoue region (Beauvilain 1989: 406).

While there is a general suspicion among the common people in Cameroon against “the politics of the belly” (Bayart 1993), in Mindif, non-Fulbe (or “pagan”) people express a particularly strong awareness of social injustice and legal inequality. The aversion towards, and mistrust of authorities is particularly strong in Mindif because until 1973 the lamido simultaneously fulfilled the function of sous-prefet. This way, the lamido united two forms of state legitimated power in his hands. The local population has had many negative experiences with the powerful Fulbe elite in Mindif and is still very suspicious towards all authorities, but particularly towards the Fulbe. Stories and testimonies regarding the Fulbe elite accumulating wealth by extracting excessive taxes and tribute abound. A complaint in Mindif frequently heard, up to the present day, is: “*le lamido bouffe trop*.” In the third section, the chief’s power in land allocation will be discussed.

Ethnic-Regional Party Politics

After Independence, Fulbe dominance in the North appeared not only in the authority of the lamibe, but also in the civil service and state apparatus of Cameroon. Ahidjo’s policy was focused on enforcing a regional balance between the Northern and the Southern part of Cameroon. Regional power conflicts were suppressed by incorporating all large ethnic-regional power blocks into the state organization, in exchange for strict loyalty to the state. However, within the “Northern block”, which was the most powerful block under Ahidjo, there was a strong regional imbalance, as the hegemony of the Fulbe elite was maintained. It was very difficult for the non-Fulbe elite in the

North to enter national politics during the Ahidjo administration (cf.. Bayart 1993; Schilder 1994). This situation partly changed after 1984.

Under president Biya, the fragile balance of power could not be maintained. After a coup attempt in 1984, the Northern elite had to give way to the Beti, Biya's power base in the South which claimed a larger "part of the cake". In some regions of North Cameroon, the educated elite of non-Muslims acquired better positions, replacing Islamic functionaries, heads of departments, and civil servants. The pressure to convert to Islam gradually decreased. In Mindif, however, most of the Muslim elite have maintained their superior positions. Non Fulbe population groups still have very little access to the local customary (Fulbe) and state administration, unless they adopted the Fulbe culture and authority.

The Fulbe rulers in Mindif, who were originally elite members of the RDPC, used to combine their traditional authority with party leadership. This enlarged and strengthened, but also corrupted their power, which made the Mindif people suspicious of all authorities. After the establishment of the multi-party system, most of the lamibe have remained loyal to the RDPC, but they have to cope now with the strong influence of the supposedly Fulbe opposition party UNDP, and a rising ethnic consciousness by the Giziga and other non-Fulbe population groups. When the first parliamentary elections were held in March 1992, the ruling party RDPC did not receive any support from the Fulbe anymore, but almost only from the non-Fulbe population. Muslims massively voted for the opposition party UNDP, which is considered to be Ahidjo's heritage.

During the last presidential elections (October 1992), RDPC and MDR (which was created by the Tupuri politician Dakole Daissala) were able to manipulate these anti-Fulbe feelings by suggesting the threat of a renewed state of slavery if they dared to vote for the UNDP.⁴ As a result of this anti-Fulbe campaign (and facilitated by the spreading of many Fcfa 1000 billets), the RDPC/MDR coalition gathered many *Kirdi* votes.⁵ The MDR leaders developed a sharpened regional-ethnic consciousness called *le Kirdisme*, particularly among the Tupuri, and to a lesser extent Mundang, Massa, and Giziga, based on a common distrust of Fulbe politicians, a fear for renewed Fulbe dominance, and a desire to participate in the regional and national politics. This has stirred and increased the dormant anti-Fulbe feelings among the Kirdi peoples. In this atmosphere, the local and politics are explosive items, as will be shown in the next section.

Local Authorities and Land Tenure

How do the party politics and power struggles influence the way of living at the local level, or concretely, why does the political regional imbalance within the Extreme North result in insecure access to land for the female farmers of Mindif? To answer this question, a brief sketch of the local situation is given with regard to ecology, land policy, and land access.

The ecological problems of the Extreme North are manifold: an increasing shortage of land on the one hand, and ecological deterioration (desertification, erosion, and soil degradation) on the other hand. Some resources are more subject to pressure and competition than others; in some villages scarcity and competition are still absent. In Mindif, we see a situation of scarcity and degradation of good-quality rainy-season land, and an absolute scarcity of wet lowlands, called *karal*, on which a species of dry-season millet can be grown and cattle can be grazed. Other resources such as water and firewood become heavily competed for. As a result, the use of natural resources such as water and firewood become heavily completed for. As a result, the use of natural resources is getting commercialized and restricted in Mindif. Because of the competition with land for agricultural purposes, which is continuously expanding, agro-pastoral conflicts flare up regularly.¹⁰⁹ Good quality land is scarce within reach of Mindif, and only poor, infertile soil or land at distances of more than an hour's walk can be cleared.

The food production is oriented towards sorghum and millet (cultivated in the rainy season) and increasingly towards *muskwari*, a variety of millet which can be cultivated in the dry season on *karal* fields. The introduction of muskwari in the 1950's has certainly increased the food security in the region, as the period of *soudure*¹¹⁰ is much shorter now. Male farmers usually grow

¹⁰⁹ An USAID agro-pastoral project has been initiated in 1978, to regulate and diminish these conflicts, but has stopped ten years later, due to conflicts and mismanagement. As the project did not directly affect women's access to land, it will therefore be felt out of scope in this paper.

¹¹⁰ This is the yearly food shortage after the millet harvest has been fully consumed, the period can range from March/April until the new millet harvest in September/October.

many varieties of millet and *muskwari* as the staple crop, and cotton as a cash crop. The most common crops for women (for sale and for consumption) are groundnuts millet, sorghum, and vegetables. Women in Mindif hardly cultivate *muskwari*. Groundnuts are grown in large quantities by women, both as food and cash crop. Millet is cultivated by women mostly to feed their children, and to brew beer. Cotton has also become convenient as a cash crop for women.

Land Tenure

Inhabitants of Mindif who needed land, used to ask permission from the *lamido* or the quarter head, *djaoro*, to go into the bush and clear land themselves, or they asked one of these authorities to give them some existing plots for housing and cultivation. These plots could be used freely by the “owners”, and they could be inherited by their children, or given away to others who needed the plots more (Pontle 1973; Van den Berg 1994).

As a consequence of the growing scarcity and competition for land, access to land is increasingly based on private ownership. One of the clearest examples of the transformation of the land tenure situation in the Extreme North is the purchase of fields. The payment of money to acquire land is primarily related to the growing scarcity of good land, and a result of more tightly defined rights to land. It refers mainly to the categories of land completely occupied and very limited available: land for housing, and the highly desired, but scarce, dry-season millet fields (*karal*). *Karal* fields are often sold by the *lamido* (who controls these fields) at prices from Fcfa 10,090 to 20,000 per 0.25 ha; compounds may cost up to Fcfa 100,000. Even rainy-season fields are more difficult to be obtained without payment of rent. A second consequence of the competition for land, in general, is that customary rights in land hardly circulate anymore, but are becoming fixed and more restricted, related to permanence of use and occupancy (cf. Bruce 1988; Chaurin 1991). Secondary right holders, particularly married women who have access to land through their husbands, run the risk of being excluded. It is well-known that women’s problems of getting access to resources are increased in regions with scarcity, because that sharpens the land tenure rules:

A woman never fully controls the land she has worked, regardless of the extent of her contribution or her responsibilities toward family

livelihood. (..) In fact, with abundant land, people did not worry much about fine points of land 'ownership' since it was so easily available. (. . .) Women had de facto access to the land that they farmed. (Newsman 1981: 122-24, my emphasis)

Indeed, the Giziga norms (Pontle 1973; 1984) as expressed by informants and authorities, do not acknowledge women's independent need for and rights to land. This did not withhold them from following various strategies to acquire independently rights to land. What is changing now, is that husbands are also getting very reluctant to give land to their wives, which is very disadvantageous for women. I will come back to women farmers in the next section.

What role do the local authorities play in this competition for land? With regard to the allocation and control over land within the Mindif administrative unit, we can distinguish five authorities which form a multi-layered and intertwined complex of competition and clashes of interests: sous-prefet, mayor, *lamido*, *lawan*, and *djaoro'en*. The state has granted the *lamido* executive and judiciary powers over the land and the population of Mindif, including the non-Fulbe population groups such as the Giziga and Mundang. Within the village of Mindif, the *lamido* deals directly with land tenure, and at the local and quarter level, he delegates the daily land control to his representatives. These the local and quarter level, he delegates the daily land control to his representatives. These customary authorities have direct powers to allocate and redistribute land to their subjects.

They allocate the natural resources in their territory, control the land use, resolve conflicts, and collect taxes. The *lamido* is seen as the "owner" of all his territory, who has the right to give (or sell) and claim land or concessions as he likes. There are many cases of land appropriation by the successive *Lamibe* of Mindif who needed land for their own use or for community aims. The *lamido* owns and sells large tracks of good-quality *kara* fields around Mindif, while other fields in the bush belong to some influential *djaoro'en*. They may rent out or sell these private owned lands.

In sum, we can state that a strong competition for power has grown among the local political authorities, particularly with regard to land tenure. Land allocation has become a major means of power control for the large customary chiefs. They use their allocative powers to strengthen their control

over the population. This has only increased since the introduction of the land reform law in 1974.

The 1974 Land Law

The 1974 land law (Ordinance 74-1, and additional decrees) gives the possibility to apply for a land title to a compound or agricultural land, on which the applicant has customary rights or a certificate of purchase. Registration of the plot grants the applicant full land ownership. The law had been enacted to regulate the many land conflicts in Cameroon, and to encourage agricultural development through registration of title. A further goal was to encourage the national integration of the regions, enabling everyone to settle in whatever region he/she liked to without customary restrictions (Republic of Cameroon, 1981).

Since the 1974 land law, the mayor and sous-prefet have become the functionaries responsible for the allocation of land in Mindif. Under the new law, the *lamido* does not have a formal say over land allocation anymore; all land falls under the national domain and is administered by the *sous-prefet*. The *lamido* has only a seat at the Consultative Commission, which decides about the registration of title. The mayor claims authority over the urban domain (*le domaine communal*, according to the land law) i.e., all terrains within a town planning and all lots parcelled out.

There is an abundance of literature about the impact of land laws all over Africa, and it is a well-known fact that people with weaker land rights, especially women and migrants, are the first to lose their use rights after land forms, and finally are worse off than before.¹¹¹ However, in the Extreme North of Cameroon, it appears that the local farmers. Although under the new land law the role of the *lamido* is legally played out, in practice he obviously remains the main actor in the allocation of land, with a great voice in land transactions and the granting of land titles as well. Hierarchical power structures and old habits do not change rapidly, thus most of the people still turn to the *lamido* for land. As a result, all authorities use the law to increase

¹¹¹ See, for example, Downs & Reyna 1988; Le Bris, le Roy, Crousse 1991; Fisiy 1992; Bruce 1988; Bassett 1993; van den Berg 1993.

their control over the people, and to enhance their positions vis-a-vis the other authorities of Mindif, and in particular the *lamido*.

Women In Search For Land

Giziga women have increasingly problems to acquire access to land. These problems are caused by scarcity and deterioration of natural resources which restrict their customary rights to land, and by power struggles at the local and household level, which makes it even more difficult for women to get their rights to land acknowledged (cf. Davidson 1988; Newman 1981).

The general Giziga ideology holds male family heads responsible to feed their family with their millet fields which are worked by the whole family, whereas women add the sauce by their own means. It is said that women do not need independent plots, as their husbands take care of the staple food production. In practice, however 60% of the Giziga women in Mindif have their own plots (cultivated with food crops and often some cotton) which they work individually or with the help of their own income, and for this reason, have the lowest priority. Their fields are the last ones to be farmed, the smallest ones, and often of worst quality. In practice, nevertheless, the products from women's fields are often used to fulfil the family's daily nutritional needs. In contrast, men spend part of their harvest and money to satisfy their own needs -particularly from the cotton money which is paid once a year.⁹

Women's Access to Land

What are women's reactions and strategies to meet these ecological and political limitations to land acquisition? My research among Giziga women in Mindif shows that they acquire access to land through various relations: marriage with their husbands, 28% have cleared land and 21% have found other means, e.g., renting or loaning land, and inheritance. Furthermore, I found files of five women in Mindif who have applied for land titles. In the following paragraphs these practices are discussed. The growing land scarcity in Kagao-Mindif is reflected in the relatively low number of women who have cleared land, and the higher number of women who have rented land from the djaoro, compared to other villages in the vicinity of Mindif.

Interestingly, women’s strategies to acquire land vary considerably according to their various life stages (see table 1).

Table 1. Means of land acquisition and age in Kagao-Mindif

age women	husband’s fields	inherited	rent from djaro	self cleared	total land	no land
< 30	5	-	2	1	8	15
30-45	5	1	2	-	8	2
>45	4	1	-	7	12	2
TOTAL: 47	14	2	4	8	28	19

Women can usually only acquire access to land through their husbands in a later stage in their life, when they have acquired more autonomy and have developed skills to manipulate kinship and village leaders and to defend their own rights. Young married women, being the mother of young children, are not able to devote much time to their own fields and commerce. Usually, they do not get permission from their husband to work a field of their own, but they often start brewing bilbil (millet-beer) to earn their own money. After having given birth to a number of children, women have more room for manoeuvre, more freedom of action and movement. They often decide in that stage of their life to divorce from their husband, and start a new marriage elsewhere. In the same period of their life, women also start farming independently, preferably on self-cleared fields.

Access to Land through Marriage

Women can acquire access to land primarily through marriage relations, and access through negotiations with local authorities (clearance, rent, purchase, title).” As we have seen, about half of the women have access to land through their husbands. A man usually gives his wife a part of his own land (often the old exhausted plot when he is clearing a new one) and he has the right to reclaim the plot if he needs it. Women have customary use rights

and management rights to these fields.¹¹² In these cases, women do not have much to deal with the village chief or the *lamido*, except for conflict situations. When the woman divorces, she has to leave the compound and the land on which she worked. Her husband will reclaim the land. When the husband dies, the widow sometimes has the right to use the compound and part of their late husbands' land, as a custody for their minor children - which means that they can be evicted when the children are grown up and married.

Fairly often, however, a man denies his wife access to land for various reasons: the risk of less available labour on his fields when she works her own fields, or men just don't like their wives to have some money independently. The growing scarcity of land renders more men unwilling to give their wives land. Moreover, about 70% of the women divorce, establish new marriages, and just have to wait and see when and if their new husband will be so kind to allocate an old plot to her (Van den Berg, 1994; forthcoming). The frequent divorces make a woman's relations through marriage very unstable, and their access to land equally vulnerable. So, what alternative strategies outside kinship and marriage relations - can women follow to ensure themselves rights to land?

The Role of Local Authorities

One of the strategies of women is to *clear* own plots, although the leaders did not favour such acts. A woman could clear a small part of the bush herself, after having asked permission from the *lamido* and paid him a sum of money, and from her husband if she is married. Clearing land with hoe and axe is very hard and tough labour, or costs a lot of money when someone's labour force is hired. In Mindif, only a minority of women choose this option (8 out of 47, all of whom are older married or single living women). In

¹¹² This important contribution of women to find the food supply was hardly mentioned spontaneously during interviews, and it was strongly suggested that women's fields were not important. I have the impression that this ideology- of men being responsible for the household's nutrition, and women only working secondarily in their own fields- serves as a guarantee for men that their own fields will be given priority in the distribution of their wives' labour. It can be hypothesized that, should men admit the important contribution of their wives to the household's food supply, women would have stronger positions in the allocation of land and labour.

principle a woman is the holder of her self-cleared fields to others, but selling is not allowed. At her death her children will usually reclaim her fields.

In the present situation of Mindif, however, there are at least two major differences with the past, which makes a woman's act of land clearing more discordant than before. One is the growing scarcity of bush and good quality land, combined with the pressure of cotton production. This increasing land pressure diminishes the options for women to clear land themselves. At present, married women who start clearing land, enter into a situation of competition with their husbands and other men. It is even so that land clearing nowadays is associated with marriage conflicts and competition (Van den Berg, 1994; forthcoming). The second difference with the past is that there are more single living women, for whom clearing is not a secondary choice but a necessity to have independent access to land. Single living women, for whom clearing is not a secondary choice but a necessity to have independent access to land. Single living women are most in need of land to survive alone, and suffer most from restrictions on land access.

Renting or borrowing fields are often the only ways for women to acquire access to land, if clearing is not possible. As women marry into a village community, they are considered strangers until they have stayed therefore some years and have given birth to some children. Due to their status as strangers, women are more often inclined to rent land, if they do not get land from their husband, or lack the strength to clear land. Therefore, mostly women with small children, or divorced single living women resort to renting land from the *lamido* or *djaoro*. The advantage of renting is that these fields have already been cleared, so that he' women do not need to organize labour assistance for clearing. Moreover, it can continue cultivating their land as long as they stay in the vicinity of the quarter under whose *djaoro* the plot falls. However, renting costs money which is not always covered by the yields of their fields; rented fields have been used by many people before and are quickly exhausted.

Compounds and karat fields are increasingly subject to *purchase* at market prices. The highly desired karat fields are often sold by the *Lamido* (who controls these fields) against- prices from 10,000 to 20,000. Compounds demand higher prices, up to Fcfa 100,000, depending on the quality of the construction. A particular role in this process of commercialization of land is played by the local authorities. Some *djaoro'en* (often Fulbe chiefs ruling a non-Fulbe population) and the *lamido* of Mindif use their control over the

territory by clearing large areas of waste village land (mostly karal) in order to appropriate them and then asking money to villagers who are in need of land.

This section has shown that women have very insecure access to land, although their formal rights may be secure within the well-known limits of marriage. In practice, women's customary righted to land through social relations have become subject to restrictions from scarcity of land and commercial agriculture. The permanence of women's customary rights is also depending on the state of their marriage. In a stable, enduring marriage, access through the husband or clearing a personal plot may be the most permanent mode of access, whereas in times of divorce and marriage crisis, it may be much better to rent a plot from the village head, which can be continued working after divorce.

New social groups, like unmarried and single living women who cannot rely on their 'traditional' social networks, turn to the local political authorities in order to acquire direct access to land: through loaning, renting, or buying land from the village head. It appears that the scarcity of land gives rise to power struggles between men and women, and among the local authorities. The major problem for women to acquire rights to land is that they need money, knowledge, and relationships to manipulate the various local authorities in this struggle for power. This is particularly clear with regard to the registration of title, enabled by the 1974 law.

Registration of Land

When women have acquired access to land, will they use the national land laws to secure this access? It is still very rare for women to apply for a land title in the Extreme North of Cameroon. In order to register their land, women have to prove their customary title but, as we saw, they have very weak righted to land through customary law. Giziga women are not entitled to land holding, neither through their husbands, nor through inheritance righted to their father's compounds, and in some cases to their husbands' compounds.

In the department of Kaele, under which Mindif resorts, there are 69 women who had applied for a land title against 3085 in total ($\pm 2.3\%$), of whom five in Mindif (3 married women, 1 divorced, 1 widow). In the end, only 13 titles had been granted to women at a total of 368 ($= 3.5\%$). These were generally women, Muslim and some Giziga or Mundang, who had

inherited part of their fathers' or husbands compounds . . . Only two women had bought their plot. All titles were applied for compounds, or land to be constructed with houses. What are the motives for applicants for land titles? Women, as well as a number of men, who apply for a land certificate are not so much interested in or oriented towards agricultural development (as was the initial aim of the land law), but intend to use their land title as a compensation of their weak inheritance rights. They usually build houses on their plots, or intend to do so in the future, for their children. In this way they try to create social security for their children and to protect them, and themselves, against abuse of power by the local authorities. It occurs not infrequently that when a single living widow dies, leaving some under age heirs behind, the *djaoro* or *lamido* (and neighbours) are inclined to appropriate the compound and land of the deceased women, in particular when there is no uncle or father to protect the children. Some local authorities are notorious for it in Mindif. They assume that a relative will take the children in his compound, but this does not always occur in practice (cf. Van den Berg, forthcoming).

Yet, even these attempts of women to secure their rights through registration are sometimes overruled by the powerful local chiefs. Who have their own interpretation of the law, as the following case shows about a land conflict of widow with the *lamido* of Mindif.

The Widow and the Lamido

Djuma Sadu, a 55-year-old woman, was born in Kaele and married to a Bamileke man who was a photographer. They settled in Mindif in 1974 and got nine children. Her husband died in 1987 in Mindif. When they had arrived in Mindif, Djuma's husband had asked the former Fulbe chief, *lamido* Ahmadu a plot to settle on, which is the terrain in dispute, measuring approx. 300 m². The man had built two huts and one brick-house to live in with his family. In 1982 he started the application for a land title, in order to stay definitively, without any fear of being expropriated. The file was made, a registration fee of Fcfa 10,000 paid, measurements and all other procedures had been finished, except for the issuing of the certificate. Djuma showed the patchment receipt and other papers concerning the measurements. When her husband died in 1987, Djuma stayed for another year on the spot, and then left for Kaele where

she was born. Her husband was buried in his plot and his corpse stayed there. She left two tenants in the houses and returned every month to collect the rent. During the rainy season she cultivated millet and vegetables on the remaining plot. This situation continued until January 1993, when it appeared that the new lamido had sold half of her terrain, on which her husbands' tomb and the house were situated. After Djuma had overheard the purchase of her own plot she went to the chief. In her view - to which I agree - the lamido did not have the right to sell a plot which was near to be, registered as her property, i.e. inherited from her husband. However, she did not dare to protest or complain against his decision to sale, but instead told him that she was going to sell the rest of her plot. She sold the other half of her plot at Fcfa 65,000. Subsequently, the lamido told her to give him 10% of the price, as is his right as a customary authority, so after the sale she gave him Fcfa 6500. Djuma commented: "I cannot sue the chief to Court. As I am a single woman, I am afraid to start a case [because she had nobody to support and help her in the trial]. "When I inquired at the lamido about this story, he denied to know anything about the woman of the plot. I could not find the land title in the files of the Department of Domaines in Kaele, although Djuma disposes of all receipts of the procedure until now. Probably, the file was lost somewhere between Domaines and the Ministry at Yaounde which is to grant the title. The villagers' comments are fatalist: "the lamido is the highest authority; even if he is not in his right, he has the power to do whatever he likes. It does not help to have a land title."

This conflict raises a lot of questions. Which authority is entitled to handle this kind of conflicts? The Department of Domaines in Kaele, not the *lamido*. Under the new land legislation of 1974 the *lamido* only has a consultative function as a member of the Land Consultative Board, and is subordinate to the sous-prefet and the civil servants of the Ministry of Domaines. What is more, no-one is entitled to sell a plot which is in the process of registration. This may be the reason why the *lamido* sold only half of the plot. Either he knew that his act was illegal, and he tried how far he could go without raising a scandal. Or he was not aware of the process of registration, as this had started before he was in function. But in that last case, he did not act according to his Fulbe inheritance law, which grants the widow $1/8$ of the property of her husband, and the rest to her children. He

cannot sell part of the inheritance when there are children to inherit.¹¹³ In both cases, Djuma would have made a good case had she sued him to court. The State authorities (sous-prefet and mayor) and civil servants at the Department of Domaines can only interfere if Djuma started a court case.¹¹⁴ Why did Djuma not proceed her protests to court? Her situation in Mindif was very vulnerable, because she did not have relatives. Both her husband and herself were strangers in the village, and could not rely on relatives for protection. Moreover, Djuma does not have money to start a court case. Her strategy, not the worst one, was to sell whatever was left to her. This conflict is but one example of the dominant role of the lamido in land allocation. Despite the fact that there are now some alternatives (land laws and state administration) to avoid dealing with the customary chief, he remains the main actor in the allocation of land and registration. The lamido cannot be by-passed.

Women Organizing Themselves

Why do women not organize themselves, and look for alternative possibilities to acquire land? Aren't they stronger to resist the local chiefs together with other women? Do women acquire and register land in common, and how is their relationship with the local authority?

After the presidential elections of October 1992, the idea of women's groups was launched everywhere by the government, also in regions where this form of organization does not have a traditional basis. As a result of this top-down approach, many attempts of organizing women are doomed to fail, because of the lack of experience in co-operating. Contrary to the famous women's associations in the North West Province of Cameroon, in North

¹¹³ An additional problem is that, considering the fact that the couple was strangle in Mindif, the laamildo was not obliged to apply the Fulbe inheritance law. However, I know of other cases in which he did so.

¹¹⁴ The laamildo of Mindif still has so much authority that whenever the sous-prefet is requested to mediate in a conflict with the chief, he will never deal with it himself but transfers the conflict to his superior, the prefet in Kaele. This is what both the sous-prefet and the prefet assured me in 1992.

Cameroon, women are not used to organize themselves. In this region, people work individually and seek individual solutions for their problems. Sometimes, a group destined to grow crops on communal fields, may exist and work successful for some time. But rotating savings - and loan associations, of which thousands exist elsewhere in Cameroon, do not get hold here.

I will give here just two examples of recent attempts of women to organize themselves. In Mindif, two young unmarried Giziga women, Fatme and Asta, had also organized a women's group in 1993 to start a rotating save-and-loan association (tontine) in order to rent and cultivate a communal vegetable garden (to cultivate and sell onions, tomatoes, and other vegetables in the dry season). They consulted the local Community Development civil servant to help organizing themselves. They started regular meetings, but before a formal structure could have been set up, the organization collapsed. Members did not show up, the treasurer who should guard the saved money was accused of theft, and soon the group was dissolved. The reason why in Mindif women's groups do often fail, is said to be lack of confidence and experience in this kind of organization. Moreover, it is commonly said that men in Mindif are afraid that their wives become rebellious and autonomous through these activities, and therefore they do not support women's groups. This attitude is very probably the influence of the Fulbe culture which also affects Giziga men in Mindif.

In less Fulbeized regions, e.g. in Mendeo, Muturwa, Kaele, women's groups are more successful than those in Mindif. These women's groups started to cultivate communal fields with cotton or groundnuts; from the sale they buy goats, which give birth to kids and so increase the group's capital. Some groups save money to buy a grinding mill, others foyers ameliores. Or the women buy bags of millet in the cheap period, to distribute them among each other during the soudure. These groups usually borrow land from the djaoro, who gives it for free. They work together as a group on the fields during 2 or 3 days, then they all go back to their individual fields to work. Nevertheless, women complained about many problems, when not all women do not contribute evenly to the tontine, or to all meetings or work parties. Other problems have been noted with a djaoro or lamido who reclaims the land after some years, when the yields are just at their top, and appropriates the women's crops and land.

Conclusion

As we saw, a growing number of women are in need of autonomous and secure access to land, because of their single status (widow or divorced), or because their husbands do not offer them enough access to land. In this paper I have presented some strategies of women to acquire secure access to resources. All these strategies are in themselves rather insecure and limited, but some of them have different impacts and meanings for women in different social situations. Access through marriage is limited to the duration of the marriage - which in this region frequently breaks off; women's rights of clearance are not recognized as such, and limited to the duration of their marriage as well. Women do not have rights to inherit, nor do they obtain rights of first clearance; nevertheless, clearance is used by women as a temporal escape strategy. The position of widows is particularly vulnerable. At the death of the husband, a widow is often deprived of his properties, and chased away from the house and land which they occupied together. We have also seen that women make increasingly use of the local authorities to acquire access to land, and are caught in a competition for power among the local authorities. Women lack alliances with the authorities, and lack money to manipulate them, as the case of Djuma shows. This causes a competition for control over resources among the various customary (Fulbe) and state authorities, in which a clever manipulation and financial 'massage' is required to get the job done. Giziga women in Mindif often lack this kind of power to manipulate the authorities. They are caught between customary Giziga restrictions, scarcity of resources, and political power struggles among the Fulbe and State authorities. In the end, they often get lost in this process, and have to search alternative strategies. A possible solution for women's lack of power could be the organization of women's associations. But the experiences in the recent past present some conditions under which this form of organization has to be developed. Groups have to be organized by women themselves, from the bottom up, and mutual distrust should be beaten.

In this paper, I have tried to show that the competition and power struggle between the Fulbe customary and State authorities affect the management of, and access to resources. Although more and more women have to rely on these authorities for their access to land, their rights cannot

be secured in this way, given the gender ideology and means of control of these authorities.

An ironical or rather sad paradox is that women try to circumvent customary and ideological barriers against autonomous access to land by addressing local authorities (i.e. clear, rent, and title registration), while they also need to protect themselves against these too greedy customary authorities. People cannot by-pass these same customary authorities, who have the power to allocate land. And to give their consent for the registration, local rulers ignore the law. The case shows further that individual actors cannot rely on the local authorities to guarantee their rights to land, and that, in the contrast, these authorities are themselves a threat to individual security. We can conclude that, in the North, women's access to land is in practice not regulated and decided by customary or state rules, but at least partly by local ethnic and political rivalries and struggles for competence among local authorities. Particularly in Mindif, the village of my research, a political arena has been created in which a strong competition for power takes place. The non-Fulbe populations, and women in particular, are largely excluded from this competition.

What is the solution to this problem of power struggle and abuse of power by local authorities? In my opinion, a strengthening of regional autonomy is not an adequate solution for this problem. On the contrary, any reference to regional autonomy is immediately rejected on ethnic terms by the Kirdi, for fear of a renewed Fulbe hegemony. The distrust among the 'pagan' populations against the Fulbe elite is much greater, and has recently grown faster than the distance between the northern periphery and the central state.

The face of North Cameroon has changed from a seemingly homogeneous Muslim block, into a ethnically diversified and polarized region, in which the relations between Fulbe and non-Fulbe are rapidly deteriorating. At present, a strong ethnic polarization between various political parties is going on. The political landscape is being shaped along ethnic-regional lines: RDPC for the southerners but to a certain extent also for the Kirdi, SDF for the Anglophones, UNDP for the Fulbe and MDR for the Tupuri. As a consequence, ethnic rivalry is also sharpened between the respective population groups, particularly between the Fulbe and 'pagan' population groups. This renewed rivalry, encouraged by politicians of RDPC,

MDR, and UNDP, is a very dangerous change which may lead to ethnic conflicts and feuds (cf. Bessem & Fisiy 1994).

To come back to the problems of women, one possible solution, as said before, is to organize local associations in order to empower themselves, and to participate in the local politics. Women have to overcome the regional and ethnic constraints, in order to acquire group solidarity. In my opinion, they should not follow the increasing emphasis on ethnic polarization or Kirdisme, because these are dangerous developments.

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Regional Imbalance in Northern Cameroon

Kees Schilder

National integration is a concept which is often associated in African studies with political ideals belonging to the 1960s rather than the 1990s. At that time, existed highstrung expectations about the transformation potentials of politics 'to change things for the better'. The essential task of the politicians of a country was to define and attain objectives which were believed to reflect common interests. This would lead to the emergence of a national political community and culture, in which the inhabitants could identify with the country as a whole and with the one-party state as its institutional expression.

We now know that the actual political reality is quite recalcitrant. It is true that the pre-existing political communities all over Africa have become more and more integrated into wider networks of intercourse with other social groups, due to the increased significance of commerce, cash crop production, health facilities, schools, world religions, and urbanization. In spite of this integration, it has proved to be extremely difficult for most African states to develop into genuine political communities. Cameroon is no exception. In almost all situations, the people living in Cameroon today do not consider the state as an institutional complex of their own society with which they can identify as "we Cameroonians".

In recent years, the power and authority of the Biya regime has become threatened by the rise of regionalism and ethnicity, economic collapse, and restless soldiers. The delegitimation of the one-party state is self-evident today any question by now. This is hardly surprising, considering the authoritarian nature of political life in Cameroon. The political alienation of large sections of the population, and the autonomous power position of the ruling classes. The so-called democratization movement has not fundamentally changed this situation. Parliament is as powerless as before. Political power is still centralized and concentrated in the hands of a small ruling group. Politics is still an elitist struggle for personal rewards with minimal or no benefits for the common people. And the *raison d'être* of the

powerful police and army forces is not primarily to guarantee law and order, but rather to control the masses and push them to political conformity and indifference.

The former head of state, Ahmadou Ahidjo, was a 'nation-builder'. Although he developed a vague nationalist ideology, stressing the centrality of independence and the promise of swift development, he was far too pragmatic to believe that such a nationalist appeal could be strong enough to overcome the existing regional and ethnic tensions in Cameroon. He preferred guaranteeing the support and allegiance of the political elite of the different regions in the country by means of a meticulous balancing of their representation at the top levels of the state apparatus according to proportionality. This patronage system, called the policy of *équilibre régional*, resulted in a country-wide coalition of political forces which in combination with the use of repressive means accounts for the remarkable stability of the Ahidjo regime during the 1960s and 1970s. It did not, however, contribute to national integration. Bayart's concept of 'hegemonic project' (1985) is much more appropriate to describe relations between the political capital and the different regions.

As an analytical term the concept of *équilibre régional* or regional balance has several flaws. It presupposes that regions are well-defined political units, and that their boundaries correspond to the major political cleavages in the country. In fact, regional boundaries are quite flexible since they are the product of political negotiations. Furthermore, the existing political disunity in Cameroon is not only produced along regional lines. In each region exist political tensions, which must also be taken into consideration in any political analysis. The current Anglophone-Francophone conflict in Cameroon attracts much attention from national and international observers. It is true that the substantial minority of Anglophones generally argues for more regional self-determination. However, it is equally true that many politicians in the Southwest province hesitate because they are afraid of Northwestern domination after such a political transformation.

In the debate which is currently taking place in Cameroon about democracy and new visions of the future, the North-South axis must not be forgotten. I focus in this paper on the relation between the national political elite in Yaounde, and the regional political elite in northern Cameroon ¹. I will argue that the intra-regional cleavages in the North are extremely important to understanding the 'hegemonic projects' of the Ahidjo and Biya

regimes. In order to show the complex relation between ethnicity, regionalism and national integration, political processes will be described and analyzed from the vantage point of one of the many ethnic groups in the North, the Mundang people (who live in the Kaele subdivision in the Mayo Kani division, which is part of the Far North Province)².

The Mundang People in Northern Cameroon

The population living in northern Cameroon can be roughly divided into two categories: the multitude of autochthonous peoples on the one hand, and the Muslim peoples, among whom the Fulbe are the dominant ethnic group, on the other³. The indigenous groups comprise about two-thirds of the total population in the region, and the Muslims about one third.

The Mundang people belong to the indigenous section. They partly live in Cameroon and partly on the other side of the border in Chad⁴, I did anthropological fieldwork in 1988-1990 and 1992 among the Cameroonian section of the Mundang people, and shortly revisited them in 1992 and 1995. They live in the central zone of the Mayo Kani Division (which was formerly called Kaele Division), in the south-east of the Far North Province⁵. They are a small group, making up less than 1 % of the total population in Cameroon. Politically, Mundang society is characterized by a number of petty kingdoms, which persist today as cantons. The most important canton is Kaele, which includes the township of the same name. The history of the Mundang people goes back to at least the middle of the eighteenth century, when a kingdom was established in Lere (Chad). Most Mundang people today are devoted farmers, almost every compound having its own fields.

Outside their villages and cantons, the Mundang people have been phased out? Over the last two centuries, with Fulbe predominance in politics, commerce, transport, literacy, urbanization, and religion. In all these fields, Islam has been the main civilizing force in Fulbe society. For most Fulbe people, it is self-evident to distinguish between themselves, as Muslims, and the local peoples in the region, such as the Mundang, who are regarded as 'pagans'. We are here dealing with a system of ethnic stratification based on religion. In the words of Lacroix (1966, p. 404):

[L']islam se confond volontiers avec le fait d'être Peul, justifie et explique : .. Le système social et politique dont ils sont les initiateurs

et les bénéficiaires, renforce enfin le sentiment de se sentir “autres” vis-à-vis des ethnies qui les entourent [...] [On] pourrait parler d’une sorte de confiscation de /’islam a leur profit.

The notion of ‘pagan’, *kaado* in Fulfulde (*pl. haabe*) has a double meaning. It not only refers to people who cherish religious beliefs and practices deemed incompatible with Islam, but also to people who do not exhibit civilized, i.e. Fulbe codes of behaviour. This sort of arrogance is vividly expressed in Schultz’s description of the stereotypical ‘pagan’, as it still exists in the minds of many Fulbe people.

The Fulbe have no trouble identifying as Haabe those individuals who speak little or no Fulfulde, or who perform Muslim religious ritual either not at all or with little skill or regularity. (. . .) Fulbe view Haabe as poor, dirty, bush-dwelling farmers who come to town only on market days, when they demonstrate their lack of sophistication by evincing astonishment at the technological wonders they see, and their lack of refinement by getting drunk and starting fights. ‘The Kaado walks rapidly, overcome by his evident desire to reach his destination in a hurry, with no time to greet those he passes (...) He allows his emotions free rein in public, feeds them with alcohol, and regularly allows them to lead him into violence’⁶

The Muslim - ‘pagan’ distinction goes back to the early nineteenth century. At that time, the ancestors of the present-day Mundang people were confronted with a series of Fulbe attacks. The establishment of a large Muslim empire in northern Nigeria resulted in the creation of a number of Fulbe polities, called lamidates, in what is now northern Cameroon. The Mundang petty kings were not totally subjugated by the rulers of these lamidates: they were relegated to the position of vassals, but did everything to maintain a considerable degree of autonomy. Relations with the Fulbe remained tense. Slavery became a profitable trade for the Fulbe people, accompanied by force and violence. The Mundang villagers often reacted with cattle-raiding. In the colonial period, which started in northern Cameroon only in 1902, the Mundang people were administratively separated from the neighbouring Fulbe rulers, through the establishment of ‘independent cantons’. The colonial authorities managed to eradicate slave-

and cattle-raiding by 1920. The ancient Muslim-pagan distinction still permeates many facets of contemporary life in northern Cameroon. I therefore argue that the political incorporation of the peoples of northern Cameroon into the Cameroonian state apparatus can only be properly understood against the background of this intra-regional disunity.

The Hegemonic Project of the Ahidjo Regime

President Ahidjo was a Pullo from the Garoua area in northern Cameroon. In order to establish and consolidate a power position in his home region, he and his close political friends from the region - such as Musa Yaya, Sadou Daudoua, and Sanda Umaru - largely relied on the loyalty and support of the political elite belonging to the Muslim section of the population. As a result, most top positions in the party and state apparatuses in the North came to be reserved for Muslims⁷.

The political elite of the autochthonous section of the population were, however, not totally excluded from political representation. The economic impact of the Mundang and other local peoples had considerably increased after the Second World War. Serious attempts were then made to encourage the socio-economic development of the Kaele area through the organized promotion of cash crop cultivation (groundnuts, and especially cotton), and a program of government-sponsored education. At the same time, several Christian missions were rapidly enhancing their activities among the Mundang people and neighbouring ethnic groups. These 'modern' novelties found their way easily into Mundang society. At that time, 'the Mundang' acquired the stereotypical reputation of being the most dynamic tribe of northern Cameroon with regard to cotton growing, schooling, and conversion to Christianity. President Ahidjo probably realized that the autochthonous people were no longer the marginal 'pagans' that many 'traditional' Fulbe still held them to be. Hence, several local chiefs were selected as petty *barons* to serve as intermediaries between the president and the groups they represented. The canton chief ruling over Kaele town and its immediate surroundings, Abubakar Wabbi, was chosen as the *baron* of the Kaele division, an area that counted about 95.000 people in 1960 and about 160.000 today. He not only represented the people of his own ethnic group, the Mundang, but also the Giziga, Tupuri, and Fulbe peoples living in the area". Abubakar was appointed Member of Parliament and member of the

central committee of the CNU for almost three decades. Due to his broker position, he could dominate political life in the Kaele division for about the same span of time. Being the main organizer and leader of the CNU party apparatus in the area, he managed to Co-opt all other canton chiefs as local party bosses, and to control all politically sensitive appointments in the area.

Until the late 1970s, local *barons* were primarily chosen from among the ranks of the « traditional » canton chiefs. Since then a new type of politician has emerged, due to the increasing importance of modern education as a qualification criterion for political careers. This country-wide development has also manifested itself in the Kaele area. Thanks to the rapid increase of mission and government schools after the Second World War, a considerable number of young men managed to acquire government jobs. From among the small number of boys who continued their studies at the secondary school in Garoua and the University of Yaounde, emerged a new generation of bureaucratically-minded politicians. Hele Pierre was the most successful among them. He attended the Catholic primary school in Lara, his home village. After having studied for a few years at the (Catholic) Mazenod College in Ngaoundere, he got his secondary school certificate at the secondary school in Garoua. He continued his studies at the University of Yaounde. After completion, he was appointed to a senior bureaucratic position at a ministry in Yaounde. In spite of his affiliation to the Catholic Church, he was appointed Vice-Minister of Finance in 1979, i.e. within the lower, mainly technocratic ranks of the national cabinet. His personal friendship with Bello Bouba Maigari - a Pullo from Garoua who was Prime Minister of Cameroon for about half a year in 1982-1983 - was probably not irrelevant to this appointment. Henceforth, Chief Abubakar Wabbi had to share his political influence as the baron of the Kaele area with Hele Pierre. In Ahidjo's system of regional balance, Hele came to be regarded as the representative of the Kaele division in the national cabinet, while Abubakar continued to be the division's representative in the CNU party". Hele's ministerial career lasted until 1984 (see below).

Denial of Cultural Identity

At first sight, the Mundang case seems to provide evidence supporting the view that the policy of regional balance was meticulously implemented in the region of northern Cameroon, covering both the Fulbe/Muslim

population and the autochthonous people. However, in fact, the political influence of the politicians representing the autochthonous peoples was quite low. Northern politicians like Hele Pierre were bureaucrats of low political profile, largely valued for their technical competence. And Bayart (1985, p. 191) wrote about the political influence of the local canton chiefs the following words:

Les chefs de canton d'extraction kirdi, qu'ils soient d'origine coloniale ou noble, ont tiré profit du recul administratif des lamibe et du développement des cultures d'exportation mais n'ont été que modestement associés aux institutions politiques du régime.

Indeed, Abubakar Wabbi did not belong to Ahidjo's core group of advisors, nor to the inner circle of key members of the central committee of the CNU party". Referring to the autocratic nature of Ahidjo's rule (and his own lack of power), he remarked in one of our conversations (in 1992) that, if Ahidjo said that something was black - he pointed to a white table-centre - then it *was black*.

The preponderance of the Muslim/Fulbe politicians in the political life in northern Cameroon was even more evident in the fields of religion and culture. Non-Fulbe politicians were subtly pushed to conform to Fulbe political culture, which was coloured by Islamic symbolism and by Fulfulde as the main spoken language. This was very clear in the behaviour of many local canton chiefs. In the words of Boutrais *et al.* (1985, p. 284):

Ils se font construire une grande demeure ... l'égal des autres chefs, entretiennent des chevaux et une cour de dignitaires affublés de titres foubé ou mandara. Eux-mêmes se "déguisent" en musulmans (.. .), ils lèvent des taxes sur les récoltes contrairement aux coutumes des Païens. Ils copient la pompe et le décorum des chefs musulmans. Leur richesse apparaît lors des têtes officielles, quand, ... cheval, protégé d'un parasol, ils défilent devant les autorités, emourent de tous leurs suivants, quelques-uns ... cheval et une grande masse ... pied. Ils se font appeler " lamido", et changent de nom lors de leur islamisation. Celle-ci et celle de leur entourage encave la transposition du modèle politique musulman en milieu païen.

The baron of the Kaele division, Chief Abubakar Wabbi, changed into a strict Muslim, learned to speak Fulfulde fluently, married four Fulbe women, and started imitating the decorum at the Fulbe *lamibe* courts. He encouraged his relatives and the 'traditional' authorities of his canton to convert to Islam. In the first half of the 1970s, Abubakar Wabbi even supported a concerted conversion campaign in the Kaele subdivision, initiated by regional state officials. Quranic scholars were invited to come and preach, and money and Islamic garments were distributed during these promotion tours. Abubakar also stipulated that the major administrative post in the division, Kaele town, acquired some Islamic glamour: Muslim names were given to newly established neighbourhoods, such as Lopere, Garga, Djamboutou and Sabongari; he prohibited the sale of pork and alcoholic drinks at the weekly market; and he had a mosque built at his costs along the main road into town (at about 150 meters from the his palace).

The local petty bureaucrats who aspired for a supra-local political career were also faced with the pressure to convert to Islam. On refusal, access to the ranks of the political elite in the area remained firmly blocked. The political career of Hamadjam Sah, who was one of the leading politicians in the Kaele division in the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, may serve as an example. Like the earlier mentioned Hele Pierre, he was born in the village of Lara, and attended the local Catholic school. He continued his studies at the (Catholic) Mazonod College, and after having completed a professional formation course, he became a teacher. In 1970, at the age of twenty-two, he converted to Islam. Afterwards he became politically active. Within a few years he developed into one of the most influential politicians in the Kaele division: he succeeded Chief Abubakar Wabbi as president of the departmental section of the UNC party, and from 1973 until 1988 he was a Member of Parliament. Hamadjam revealed himself in those years as a fervent adherent of Islam, not hesitating to make life hard for the missionaries at the mission post in his home village, where he had received his primary school education. Hamadjam's political career did him no harm: he built a second house, bought a new car, married several women, fathered almost thirty children, and acquired a well-paid job at the Kaele prefecture (which was created in 1981).

Abubakar, Hamadjam and other non-Fulbe political leaders in the area not only flirted with Islam, but also carefully avoided to be associated with the ancestral Mundang traditions. The state officials discouraged public

manifestations of non-Muslim culture: In the mid-1970s for example, the (Islamic) sub-prefect of Kaele tried to obstruct the performance of the dance masquerade, which is a key symbol of Mundang identity. Local people still proudly recall that he was chased away by the participants who started throwing stones. This kind of tension caused remarkably little opposition from Chief Abubakar and the other Mundang politicians. They preferred the Muslim view that these ancestral customs were outdated, primitive, and uncivilized. They also actively supported the obstruction of the growing activities of the Christian churches in the division. The non-Fulbe politicians were pushed to corroborate the myth of the united North in their public behaviour. Those who refused to accept Fulbe patronage, to convert to Islam, and to deemphasize their ethnic background were faced with discrimination. The working career of Bigebi Paul, for instance, the present sub-prefect of Kalfou (in the eastern part of the Kaele prefecture) was delayed for years. This Catholic Mundang man from Lara was one of the few non-Muslims from northern Cameroon who was admitted to the ENAM school. Although he had the required qualifications to be appointed to the office of sub-prefect, he could only attain the position of secretary, because he had publicly stressed his Mundang identity and had refused to embrace Islam. Only those northern politicians who made a career outside the North, such as Hele Pierre, were not forced to convert.

At the time of the Ahidjo regime, the religious and cultural distinctness of the non-Fulbe peoples in the Kaele division and elsewhere in northern Cameroon were not given any official recognition. In the huge North province, Islam was employed as a political veneer to mask the actual ethnic and cultural mosaic of the region. Kofele-Kale (1987, p. 138) wrote about this official 'myth' of a united, homogeneous North under firm Muslim control, in the following words:

Unlike the south, where ethnic multiplicity is at its highest, the north appears, on the surface at least, to be an unusually homogeneous society, united under one dominant ethnic groups, the Fulbe. (...) In this respect, the north is treated as one huge, undifferentiated ethnic leviathan held together by collective distrust of the south.

The last part of Kofele-Kale's quotation implies that regional unity was also fostered by means of an 'us'- 'them' distinction between the people of

the North and those of the rest of the country. It is true that the thinking in terms of Northerners versus Southerners implicitly masks the internal differences and tensions of the people of the North. The opposition, which goes back to pre-colonial times, runs parallel to an interrelated complex of environmental, climatic, economic, cultural, and religious differences, which are all potential referents for defining a Northern identity. Since the late colonial period, a steadily growing group of civil servants from the south have been temporarily transferred to northern Cameroon. They are locally called *gadamayo*, which is Fulfulde for 'people beyond the river'. This refers to the river Sanaga which marks the southern limit of the Fulbe conquests in the nineteenth century. The term thus stresses the immigrant status of the Southerners, as well as the 'traditional' political overlordship by the Fulbe rulers in the region. Relations between these civil servants and the local population have always remained quite uneasy, as the mutual negative stereotypes show. Southerners like to complain about the hot climate, the isolation, and the traditionalism and backwardness of the local people, whereas the latter condemn the arrogance of the Southerners. However, it is wrong to analyze the opposition vis-a-vis the Southerners as an important catalyst for arousing feelings of Northernerhood among the Mundang and other autochthonous peoples. Social distance is the rule. The civil servants from the South are a rapidly rotating group of people: they do not make local friends or learn the local language, but neither do they compete for the control over local 'scarce resources', such as land titles, marriage partners, and leadership positions. There are even several advantages for the local population: the influx of Southerners has contributed to a diversification of the supply of wares at the markets and has created a profitable market for renting houses in Kaele town and the other administrative centres in the North. In other words, there is no economic basis for the emergence of ethnic conflicts along regional lines. During the Ahidjo era, ethnic tensions in the North were not resolved but rather denied. The appearance of regional unity was only achieved by suppressing the cultural backgrounds of the non-Fulbe political elite. In fact, a large majority of the common population rejected converting to Islam. They preferred to convert to Christianity and/or to remain more or less faithful to their ancestral traditions. Nevertheless, the myth of a homogeneous Northern region, being isolated from the rest of the country and under the banner of Islam, became quite popular in the South. As indicated above, this was largely due to the Muslim

identity or appearance of most deputies, ministers, and other people vital to the region's image, and the ostentatious presence of Islamic symbols in the administrative centres in the North (in combination of course with the widespread lack of knowledge about this peripheral part of Cameroon in the rest of the country).

The Hegemonic Project of the Biya Regime

Things changed drastically after the difficult presidential change. In 1982, President Ahidjo ceded his presidential powers to Paul Biya, who is a Catholic politician from the Central-South region. Ahidjo subsequently tried to come back through the unitary party, the leadership of which he had not given up. This power struggle resulted in an unsuccessful *coup d'état* in 1984. Many Northerners were imprisoned or killed, and Ahidjo and his 'political friends' from the North largely disappeared from the national political scene¹¹. Several Mundang politicians, who had been closely cooperating with Fulbe politicians, neither got off scud-free. Hele Pierre (see above) did not survive the rounds of cabinet reshuffles, because he was considered to be an Ahidjo adept (despite his Catholic identity). His downfall started in 1983, when he was transferred to the post of vice-minister of Primary and Secondary Education. In the following year - just after the attempted putsch in April - he had to leave the government, and was demoted to an administrative job at the University of Yaounde. The other successful politician from Lara, Hamadjam Sah, lost the presidency of the CPDM party section of Kaele, in 1985, and his parliamentary seat in 1988. He could only maintain his administrative job at the Kaele prefecture.

President Biya's regime managed to establish a new stronghold in northern Cameroon among the non-Fulbe section of the population by dissociating non-Fulbe politicians in the area from the Muslim elite. Chief Abubakar Wabbi, for instance, continued to be a respected politician in the ruling party (although he could not prevent the loss of his parliamentary seat in 1988). Initially, he had remained neutral in the power struggle between Biya and Ahidjo, but even before the attempted putsch in 1984 he had distanced himself from the leading northern Muslim politicians. Thanks to this loyalty, he was not dragged into the downfall of the Northern power bloc. It is likely, however, that he was largely maintained for ego-political

reasons without much real influence, i.e. as the representative of the Kaele division in the system of regional balance.

The downfall of Hele Pierre and other Fulbe-minded politicians from the Kaele area was an important impulse for the political career prospects of other politicians of the area. Hele Pierre was succeeded by Tikela Jean as the most influential Mundang politician in Yaounde. This former teacher and school director (in Garoua and Kaele town) was appointed vice-minister of Finance in 1984, and a few years later he became vice-minister of Agriculture. Hamadjam Sah had to cede his presidency of the divisional section of the CPDM party to a Catholic, who was also chosen Mayor of Kaele town. In 1988, the two 'Mundang seats' in Parliament were granted to a Catholic nurse and a catholic primary school teacher from Kaele town. Furthermore, several non-Islamic officials from the Kaele area, such as the earlier mentioned Bigemi Paul, were appointed to the positions of sub-prefect or prefect¹². Not surprisingly, these new politicians were among the most loyal supporters of the CPDM party and the Biya government. These personnel changes in the ranks of the political elite of the Kaele area show that discrimination of non-Muslims in regional politics withered. Non-Muslim politicians became more prominent representatives of the northern region in national politics. Besides, the distinctiveness of the diverse peoples living in the North was given official administrative recognition through the division of the huge North province into three provinces, and the creation of new divisions and subdivisions within each province¹³. As a result, the myth of a homogeneous Muslim-dominated North rapidly crumbled.

This political recognition of the non-Fulbe people by the Biya regime went together with increased official recognition of their distinct cultural heritage. Even before the introduction of the multi-party system, the cultural climate became more liberal. State supported Islamization and Fulbeization pressure, opposition toward the churches, and suppression of local cultural manifestations faded in the 1980s¹⁴. State officials in the region told me in 1988 that they had instructions to tolerate the performance of local rituals, such as the Mundang masquerade and the Tupuri initiation, and to concern themselves only with the safeguarding of public order at these events. The state controlled provincial radio stations started to transmit programs in autochthonous local languages. 'Radio Maroua', for instance, which was established in 1986 for the Far North Province, not only broadcasts programs in the major 'Muslim languages' of the region (Fulfulde, Hausa,

and Shoa Arabic), but also in the languages of the major autochthonous ethnic groups in the plains (Tupuri, Giziga, Mundang, and Massa),

This rehabilitation of non-Muslim cultural life in northern Cameroon had clear repercussions on the behaviour of the political elite of the Kaele area. Most of them no longer distanced themselves from the performance of local rituals, the associated beer-drinking, etc. Being a well-respected Muslim, Chief Abubakar Wabbi could not go that far of course. However, he assured that the Fulbe version of Islam gradually faded into the background of his public image. He abandoned his earlier habit of dressing like a 'traditional' Fulbe *lamido* (with his face almost completely covered), and organizing ritual processions on horse. He continued obeying the principal religious teachings and duties of Islam, but he also started to emphasize religious tolerance and no longer pushed people to embrace Islam. In 1991, he even appointed a Protestant to the then vacant position of judge (*alkali*) in the chieftdom organization of the canton he rules. I met him several times, in the period 1988-1992, and during this time-span he expressed a growing interest in the 'Mundang traditions'. 'The Mundang tend to disregard and even oppose their culture', he said in 1988, expressing his fear that his people would lose their past and their future. He hoped that the youth would take more note of the Mundang heritage.

Increased Ethnic-Religious Tensions

In spite of this ameliorated political and cultural climate for non-Muslims in the North, the initial popularity of the Biya regime soon withered. The one-party state of Cameroon fell into a deep crisis of legitimacy in the second half of the 1980s (as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa), due to its poor economic performance and the accusations of large-scale favouring of the Beti people (to which President Biya belongs). It was more than evident that the main single party, the CPDM, had failed in its populist mission of popular mobilization. The wave of democratization in Eastern Europe, which was broadcast daily on Cameroon television, certainly served as a catalyst in this respect. Organized protest against the Cameroon one-party state started in the Anglophone NorthWest province. At the end of 1990, the Biya government was forced to give in to the growing discontent, and allowed the legalization of opposition parties. Parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 1992. Since then, the opposition is divided in a

parliamentary section, represented by the UNDP (see below), and an extra-parliamentary section, which is led by John Fru Ndi's Social Democratic Front (SDF). The heavily contested official results of the elections did not produce any radical change of power at the national level in Cameroon: President Biya and the CPDM managed to maintain their leading positions in the Parliament and the Government, and to stay in power". Until today, the opposition fails to present and maintain a united front against the president and the ruling party.

These developments have deeply touched political life in northern Cameroon. Due to the rise of two new political parties, the ancient intra-regional cleavage in the North between Muslims/Fulbe and 'pagans' has acquired strong political overtones. In 1991, Muslim politicians from the North province established an opposition party, the UNDP (*Union Nationale pour la Democratie et le Progres*). Many of the leading figures had occupied high political positions under the former president Ahidjo. For instance, the party's leader, Bello Bouba Maigari had started his political career as a *protege* of Ahidjo. He had been prime-minister of Cameroon for a short period in 1982-1983. After the attempted putsch in 1984, he fled to Nigeria, where he lived in exile until 1991. The core of the stronghold of the UNDP are the Muslim people of northern Cameroon, particularly those living in the North province. The rank-and-file of the party hoped for a reestablishment of Muslim political hegemony in the northern region. The party leadership refrained from ethnic statements - the UNDP was presented as a nation-wide party opting for cooperation, this being symbolized by the party emblem, which is a handshake - but nevertheless, it fuelled the hopes of the *militants* by fostering a nostalgic cult around ex-president Ahidjo (who had died in exile in 1989 in Dakar). People were told that at the time of the Ahidjo regime 'things' were better, corruption was less, and the economy thriving. Hence, the UNDP can be interpreted as an attempt to revive the old (CNU) party.

In response to the creation of the UNDP, a group of Catholic politicians from the Far North province established a distinct political party, the MDR (*Mouvement pour la Defense de la Republique*). They were probably supported by the CPDM top, so that the new party cannot be properly called an opposition party. Dakole Daissala, a Tupuri from the eastern part of the Kaele area whose career has known remarkable ups and downs, became its political leader.

Dakole Daissala is a Catholic, born in 1943 in the Tupuri village of Goundaye. After his studies in Garoua, Yaounde and Paris, he was one of the few educated non-Fulbe men who got a top administrative position in the North as general secretary of the IFAN (Inspection Federale de l'Administration pour le Nord). In 1969 he fell into disgrace with President Ahidjo and was dismissed, because he had refused to convert to Islam and had preferred emphasizing his Tupuri identity. In those years he developed into a living symbol of the disillusionments of those who had tried to resist Islamization and who had suffered political discrimination. However, in 1973 President Ahidjo suddenly needed him again in his policy of regional balance. Dakole was rehabilitated, and appointed director of a parastatal enterprise in Yaounde.⁷ the SOTUC (Societe des Transports Urbains du Cameroun). In 1984, he lost this top job again as he fell victim of the general suspicion against the Tupuri people in Yaounde after the failed putsch of that year - it was this ethnic group which had been most strongly represented in the Republican Guard, the spearhead of the coup attempt. Dakole was imprisoned for seven years without any charge or trial by a tribunal. In 1991 he was suddenly released. He joined his family in Kaele town, and shortly afterwards he affiliated himself to the MDR.

In this charged political climate, the Mundang politicians from the Kaele division had to make a choice between the CPDM, the MDR, and the UNDP. The afore-mentioned Hele Pierre and Hamadjam Sah, who had had their political heyday under President Ahidjo, were co-opted by the UNDP¹⁷. They were admitted to the central committee of the party for the purpose of mobilizing votes among the population in the Kaele division. Most other politicians, such as Tikela Jean and Chief Abubakar Wabbi remained loyal to President Biya's ruling CPDM party. In a conversation in 1992, Chief Abubakar strongly criticized Bouba Bello (who had visited him at his palace in Kaele town to persuade him to join the UNDP), expressing his fears about renewed Fulbe predominance in the political life in northern Cameroon. Tikela and Abubakar were the main organizers of the RDPC campaigns in the Kaele division at the 1992 elections. The quasi-opposition MDR party - the 'junior brother' of the CPDM, as several people called it did not have much appeal among the leading Mundang politicians. They were not among

the initiators nor the leaders of this party. The highest Mundang representatives in the MDR - the deputy of the Lara constituency and the president of the party sub-section in the Kaele subdivision - were just local petty bureaucrats.

Although the official program of the MDR rejects tribalism and regionalism, the party soon came to be known for its polarized attitude vis-à-vis the UNDP¹⁸. The MDR politicians cashed in on the slightest opportunity to antagonize the Muslim population. They sharpened ethnic consciousness and differentiation - the « us » vs. « they » - by playing on the existing fears for renewed Muslim hegemony if the UNDP would win the elections. In their efforts to bring together the non-Fulbe adult population under a common denominator, the MDR leaders developed a myth of past common suffering at the time of the Ahidjo regime. For this purpose, they made use of the existent kirdi term, which is synonymous to *kaado*, or 'pagan'¹⁹. The term kirdi came to represent a common experience of exclusion and discrimination at the hands of the Muslim population.

The MDR politicians were quite successful in spreading these political ideas. At the time of my major fieldwork, i.e. just before the introduction of the multi-party system, the term kirdi was hardly used by the ordinary people in the Kaele area. When I revisited the area at the end of 1992, the same people had the word on the tips of their tongues. The word had been introduced into the political discourse by high officials and students in Yaounde. In 1991, a group of high Catholic RDPC officials belonging to several autochthonous ethnic groups in northern Cameroon, established a voluntary association in the capital. They called it the DCK, which means *Dynamique Culturelle Kirdi*. Tikela Jean is one of its leaders. Under the banner of a shared kirdi identity, they discussed the danger of renewed Muslim hegemony in northern Cameroon. Even today (1995) they organize monthly meetings in the Yaounde, in order to promote anti-Muslim feelings among officials and students of northern origins. In 1991, political manifestos written in French also started to circulate in Yaounde and in the major towns in northern Cameroon. These were equally intended to strengthen anti-Muslim feelings and to promote the idea of a common kirdi past and destiny. One of these manifestos, the (*Memorandum de la majorite opprimée du "Grand" Nord-Cameroun*), which was probably composed of students at the University of Yaounde, asserted that at the time of the Ahidjo regime the people in northern Cameroon had been pressed to convert to Islam for political

reasons ; their home regions had been neglected by the government in the fields of public investments, schooling, and health; they had faced discrimination in gaining access to high jobs in the government, the administration, the army, and at the university.

Cette politique d'exclusion, de ségrégation et de marginalisation conduite par Ahidjo durant tout son règne (...) a littéralement assommé psychologiquement et lamé le cœur et la conscience de tout le peuple kirdi. Beaucoup ont douté et continuent de douter d'eux-mêmes. Certains ont perdu leur identité, mais la majorité est restée fière et stoïque dans la souffrance. Les entailles sont très profondes et leur cicatrisation sera aussi très longue.

This quotation shows that the ethnic diversity of the autochthonous population is played down by means of a gross reification, le peuple kirdi. The manifesto concludes with a call for self-assurance and unity: *"Nous sommes nombreux, intelligents, courageux et disciplinés, et la démocratie est une réalité. Alors unissons-nous!"*.

The emergence of this political *kirdi* movement is a new phenomenon. For the first time in history, the non-Muslim population in northern Cameroon has politically asserted itself independently of Muslim overlordship. This development was of course strongly aided by the marked inequalities in terms of development and opportunities for development which indeed existed between most Muslims and most people belonging to autochthonous groups. It rapidly broke down the myth of a Muslim-dominated North, and transformed the non-Fulbe ethnic groups of northern Cameroon into an important political force in the political life at the regional and national level.

The strengthening of the internal cleavages in northern Cameroon by the MDR leadership was supported by the Biya regime. Its strategy of diverting votes away from the Fulbe-dominated oppositional UNDP by means of the quasi-oppositional MDR was quite successful. A resurgence of the former Muslim power bloc in northern Cameroon has been prevented. The MDR won representation in Parliament in 1992, and being in a pivotal power-balance role - even entered the new government. At the campaign for the presidential elections in that same year, the MDR politicians supported President Biya against Bello Bouba Maigari. The official results of the two

elections show that the CPDM-MDR alliance managed to attract a majority among the voters in northern Cameroon, especially in the populous Far North Province. This victory was largely due to the support of the non-Muslim voters²⁰.

In a multi-party system, identification with an ethnic group easily leads to identification with a certain political party. However, it is wrong to totally equate the MDR/CPDM with the autochthonous people, and the UNDP with the Muslims. The MDR/CPDM coalition is, for instance, much more popular among the Tupuri people in the Kaele division than among the Mundang people. At the parliamentary elections the two seats reserved for the Mundang populations, went to the MDR/RDPC, but the UNDP candidates were only beaten by a nose. The following table shows that Bello Bouba Maigari was even slightly more popular among the Mundang voters than Paul Biya at the presidential elections.

Voting behaviour at the presidential election in the Kaele area according to ethnic identity (in. %/)²¹

	Fulbe	Mundang	Giziga	Tupuri
Paul Biya	15	41	66	89
Bello Bouba	79	45	24	5
Others	6	14	10	6
Total	100	100	100	100

The political rise of several MDR politicians of Tupuri origin negatively affected the political influence ‘Of the Mundang politicians. After the parliamentary elections, Tikela Jean, who had been the representative in the cabinet for the Kaele area since 1984, had to make room for Dakole. Nevertheless, he maintained considerable political influence as a *conseiller special* at the Presidency. The MDR leader became minister of state, representing the whole North in the cabinet, heading the ministry of Post and Telecommunications. At the same time, Chief Abubakar Wabbi lost his membership of the CPDM’s central committee. Hence, for the moment the leading Tupuri politicians are much more effective brokers than their Mundang colleagues. Most Mundang people to whom I talked about this subject explained their under-representation in ethnic terms. They told me that the MDR is a ‘Tupuri party’, emphasizing that Dakole belongs to this

ethnic group, and that Tupuri dances had been performed at electoral meetings. Therefore, many Mundang people had refrained from joining the MDR. This local point of view, which emphasizes an age-old Mundang-Tupuri opposition, expresses the hesitant and ambivalent attitude of many educated Mundang people with regard to the kirdi movement. Having acquired an intermediate position between the Fulbe elite and the autochthonous ethnic groups in the region, most members of the Mundang state elite were not very enthusiastic about supporting a political program which promises to ameliorate the underdevelopment and marginalization of the underprivileged in northern Cameroon. After 1992, the CPDM has managed to regain much of its former strength in the Kaele division. The coalition between the MDR and the CPDM at the national level has not excluded political strife between the two parties at the local level. The MDR plan to split the Kaele subdivision into several administrative units, which would automatically lead to increased government investments in the area, was successfully blocked by leading CPDM officials in 1994: they were opposed to the reform because it would greatly enhance the popularity of the MDR among the Mundang voters. The MDR Mayor of the Kaele Commune, appointed in 1992 after the parliamentary election, stepped over to the CPDM in 1995. The oppositional UNDP has also lost much of its initial appeal in recent years. The two leading Mundang politicians of this party, Hele Pierre and Hamadjam Sah, both lost their government jobs. Furthermore, the unity of the UNDP has been strongly eroded in recent years due to internal strife between its leaders. In 1995, several UNDP politicians, headed by Hamadou Moustapha, established a new political party, the ANDP (*Alliance Nationale pour la Democratie et le Progres*), which seeks close cooperation with the ruling CPDM²². This fission will probably revive the ancient rivalry between the Garoua and Maroua factions in the Muslim power bloc.

The official recognition of non-Islamic culture in northern Cameroon, which had started in the 1980s, has become more pronounced after the introduction of multipartyism. The Biya government started organizing so-called 'cultural weeks' (*semaines culturelles*) in the major towns all over the country from 1991 onward. These cultural festivals - I attended the one which was held in Garoua in November 1992 - were a blend of 'tradition' (ethnic dance and music performances, and exhibitions of artifacts of material culture), sports, speeches, and distraction, partly sponsored by

advertising companies. The Garoua festival was a manifestation of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the population in the region: not only Muslim culture was presented, but also local culture could freely express itself. Even in the rural zones of northern Cameroon, cultural exhibitions were occasionally organized by local 'development associations' (*groupes de ressortissants*)²³ In the Mundang villages of Lara and Midjivin in the Kaele area, for example, this kind of 'cultural exhibitions' has been organized every year since. 1991, following the example of the 'cultural weeks'. Mundang-associated cultural stuff is exposed on these occasions with kind permission of the state authorities.

The repercussions of the enhanced status of non-Muslim culture on the behaviour of the political elite in the Kaele area are not difficult to see. In recent years small but increasing numbers of Mundang people who consider themselves to be 'modern', develop a renewed interest in the cultural ways of their ancestors. I met several petty bureaucrats who were quite enthusiastic about my work as a cultural anthropologist. These men are presently wiping the dust off old theses and other bits of writing (in French) on local culture, which they had themselves composed at school many years ago. Several sons of Mundang politicians, including those of Hele Pierre, participated at the initiation ceremonies in the Mundang villages of Gaban (in 1989) and Lara (in 1990). New arguments are advanced to explain this re-orientation upon the local traditions. Parents fear that their sons who were born and raised in town, have completely lost contact with the ancestral traditions. Many children of the first generation of town dwellers do not feel at home in 'their village', and are not able to 'properly speak' their mother tongue. To counter-balance this cultural alienation, parents may decide that their sons need a 'Mundang education', hoping that the experiences in the bush would have an ethnic identity creating effect. Furthermore, several educated people fear that Mundang culture is rapidly disappearing, as the generation of male village elders who still know the ins and outs of the Mundang Traditions is rapidly dying out.

The downfall of the Muslim-dominated power bloc in the North after the failed putsch in 1984 went hand in hand with an increased political importance of the northern non-Fulbe politicians for the Biya government. Henceforth, they were no longer pushed to conform to the Fulbe cultural mainstream. As a result, the image of the North has changed from an 'ethnic leviathan' (as Kofele-Kale had called it) to a region characterized by ethnic,

religious, and cultural diversity. The dangers of this liberalization have become evident after the abolition of the one-party state in 1991. In their efforts to mobilize votes, many leading politicians from the CPDM, MDR, and UNDP could not withstand the temptation to exploit the pre-existent ethnic tensions in the region. They are largely responsible for the deteriorated relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the area in recent years. Evidently, the continued control over the North by the Biya regime could only be guaranteed through the increase of internal rivalries in the northern region, and the alienation of the general Muslim population from the central government.

Conclusions

At the time of the one-party system, unity and progress were believed to be strengthened by centralization and concentration of power in the hands of a small ruling group. The Parliament was almost without power, and a legal opposition was non-existent. Participation of the common people in the decision-making process through the single party was a piece of low comedy. The expanding police and army were the main vehicles for controlling the masses, and pushing them to political conformity. There were no political procedures to signal; to criticize, and to fight the practice that the political elite were busy defending their own particular and tribal interests rather than working 'for the common good'. In the early 1990s, several things changed in the political system. A legal opposition is now (more or less) tolerated, and the participation of the people in multiparty elections has been guaranteed. However, these changes have not been fundamental. The democratic experiment has not changed the pre-existing political power relations in the country, and has as yet not found a way to bridge the gap between the political elite and the common people. Power is still concentrated in the hands of the same old ruling group; the periodical elections do not contain a mechanism for a possible change of government prescribed by generally accepted rules; the competence of the Parliament is as limited as it used to be; and the police and army forces are as powerful and authoritarian as before. The political elite continue to be primarily a self-interest group whose transformation potential is negligible. Political dreams and ideals, such as a genuine belief in unity and progress, are, and always were, rare in the political life in Cameroon. Pragmatic social strife is predominant. This is evident in

the hegemonic projects of the Ahidjo and Biya regimes with regard to the northern region.

Every regime in Yaounde must take account of the deep social contradictions between the Muslims and the multitude of autochthonous groups in that part of the country. No post-independence government has managed to forge a stable power balance between these two power groups in the North by allowing their proportional representation and participation in the national political life. President Ahidjo was notably supported by the Muslim population. Cultural domination was assumed to be the only way of governing the North. Islamized political leaders of the local ethnic groups, such as the Mundang chief Abubakar Wabbi, were given the opportunity to join the Islamic power bloc, but their political influence remained weak. Under President Biya, the non-Islamic Northern politicians participate more in the national institutions and in the decision-making process. The Biya government has increasingly relied on the support of the non-Muslim peoples in the North, especially after the introduction of a multi-party system in the early 1990s. This political shift has had several consequences. The Muslim population has experienced increasing difficulty to get access to the centres of political power, and was thus driven into the opposition; the idea of a homogeneous North has lost most of its appeal; and the pre-existing tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims have acquired strong political overtones in recent years. Political incorporation of the North is thus primarily based on pragmatic divide-and-rule politics, rather than a nationalistic kind of solidarity.

The lack of unity equally implies that the concept of regional balance cannot be properly applied as a descriptive term to elucidate the political strategies of the national elite in Yaounde with regard to the North. The concept presupposes an equilibrium which has never existed in the political field of northern Cameroon, since the ethnic groups in that region have always been unequally represented in the state apparatus. This will not change as long as the uncompromising clan of fellow Beti around President Biya, who are determined not to cede power to the opposition or to other ethnic groups, remains in power in Yaounde.

These recent political developments convincingly underline that 'national integration' is a void concept in Cameroon political 'life and that ethnic and regional loyalties do not necessarily disappear with modernization. The popular belief, right or wrong, that certain sections of the population are

monopolizing power and receiving more benefits, inevitably leads to an increase in ethnic tensions. It seems that only two options are available to the national political elite in Yaounde for governing the North. It is a choice between Muslim dominance combined with cultural repression of the non-Muslim population, and official recognition of the non-Muslim populations in politics and culture combined with a politicization of ethnicity. The first option violates the universal human right of freedom of cultural expression, whereas the second option easily endangers the precarious unity and security. It is of course extremely difficult to establish national unity in a state where plurality is the rule. Especially in a multi-party system, pre-existing social cleavages on the basis of culture, language, religion, etc. can easily become over-emphasized, if these are called upon in the struggle for votes. The weakness of any competitive framework in which elections are important is its vulnerability to this kind of abuses by politicians. Nevertheless, what is necessary is not the suppression of ethnic affiliations and cultural variety in the North (and elsewhere in Cameroon). Rather, cultural self-discovery in its ethnic specificities must be stimulated. Ethnicity could even be used as a building block for national integration.

Considering the fact that nationalism is a specific type of ethnicity at large, lessons can be learned from the nature of ethnic bonds to establish nationalistic feelings among the general population in Cameroon. This not only means that diversity must be given a legitimate place in the process of 'nation building', but also that what unites the many peoples in the country must be much more forcefully highlighted (rather than what divides them). Policy programs are needed that manage and regulate relations between the diverse groups. In the North, these programs must be directed at the establishment and enshrining of equity among the Muslim and non-Muslim sections of the population in the distribution of power and public goods. The implementation of such policy programs also requires the development of commonly shared values among the political elite, defining common interests on the basis of cultural tolerance.

The question remains how to increase this sort of normative consensus governing political behaviour among the Muslim and non-Muslim members of the political system. The political experiences of those sections of the population which somewhat blur the distinction could be very useful in this respect. This intermediate grouping consists of two major categories: (1) the Islamized people, i.e. autochthonous individuals and families who have

converted to Islam; and (2) the Christianized people who were able to make a career under the Ahidjo regime. Both social categories are well represented among the Mundang and other autochthonous people. However, it is important to realize that such cultural changes at the regional level are likely to remain futile without constitutional reforms allowing for further decentralization of the Cameroon state. Such reforms are necessary because the existing highly centralized system of government and administration is not at all conducive to peace and co-existence at the regional level (as I have amply shown in this article).

Notes

1. The topic of the political participation and mobilization of the 'masses' is not taken into consideration in this article, because the common people are still largely excluded from any influence on the decision-making process.

2. Of course, each category is characterized by internal divisions. The Muslim population is divided into several ethnic groups, the unity of the dominant Fulbe is continuously undermined by factional strife, and Islam has many different faces. The differences within the autochthonous section of the population are so immense that it could be argued that their sense of unity is largely based on their non-Muslim status. However, for the purposes of this paper it is necessary to focus on the religious-ethnic division between Muslims and non-Muslims.

3. The Chadian Mundang have been extensively studied by the French ethnologist Alfred Adler.

4. For more information on the Mundang people, see my Ph.D. thesis, Schilder (1994).

5. Schultz (1979, pp. 250-251; 1980, p. 134).

6. For a description and critical assessment of this systematic favouring of the Muslims in the north by the Ahidjo government, see Bandolo (1985, pp. 400-405), and Schilder (1991, 1993a, 1994).

7. The petty Fulbe laamibe of the Kae/e division were bypassed, because the isolated Fulbe groups they represented were poorly educated. Furthermore, they belonged to the same Yillaga family branch as the lamido of Maroua, who was one of the main adversaries of President Ahidjo.

8. Ngayab (1983, pp. 82, 85, 287, 296, 302)

9. See LeVine (1986, pp. 42-43); and Ngayab (1983, p. 244).
10. On the attempted putsch and the related reshuffles in Cameroon politics, see Africa Confidential (1984b, p. 5-6; 1984c, p. 4-6); Bandolo (1985, pp. 377-412); LeVine (1986); Bayart (1986); and Mehler (1993, pp. 47-50).
11. At the time of the Ahidjo regime, three Mundang men were appointed to the office of sub-prefect, all of them being Muslims. At the moment there are more than a dozen sub-prefects in Cameroon belonging to the Mundang group, most of them being non-Muslims.
12. Ngayap (1983, pp. 183, 189); and Domo (1987, pp. 63-66). 13 See also Bandola" (1985, p.402).
14. France was the only country to recognize Biya's re-election. Most foreign observers believed that Anglophone and opposition leader John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front was the real winner.
15. Useful information on the emergence of the UNDP and the MDR and on the elections of 1992 can be found in Onana's booklet (1994), although it reflects the dominant RDPC point of view.
16. See also Onana (1994, p. 133).
17. In a policy plan, written by Dakole Deisset« (1992), one can read that '(ce) parti a l'ambition de se faire l'écho et le porte-parole des aspirations profondes de tout le peuple camerounais sans distinction d'origine géographique ou ethnique, sans discrimination religieuse ou culturelle.' Progress is attained by means of 'une lutte constante contre le tribalisme, le féodalisme et les sectarismes de toutes sortes.'
18. The word *kirdi* had been introduced in the region by French colonial officers after the First World War. At the time of the Ahidjo regime, it was somewhat popularized as an honorary nickname by Cameroon Catholic missionaries in the Mandara mountains who originated from the diocese of Douala, like Baba Simon and Jean-Marc Ela.
19. See Schilder (1993b, 1994).
20. These percentages are based on the results per polling station and my own detailed knowledge of the ethnic distribution of the population in the area. The results of the subdivisions of Moutourwa, Kaele, and Guidiguïs (with the exception of the village of Guidiguïs) are covered in the table, i.e. the territory of the ancient Kaele subdivision (until 1981).
- 21 See e.g. Le Jeune Enquêteur, no.s, 22 September 1995, pp.5-11.
- 22 The establishment of these development associations has been promoted by the Ministry of Planning since the middle of the 1980s. They

aim at promoting local loyalties to encourage people to contribute to local development (and reduce financial dependence on the central government).

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Marketing Of Food Crops in the Central Province Of Cameroon: Some Preliminary Results

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Introduction

The study aims to analyze to which degree the marketing of food crops can lead to economic development in the Central Province in Cameroon. Economic development is defined here in a narrow way: the strengthening of sources of income. In the Central Province fluctuations in marketing of the major cash crops occur and rural households still depend on the agricultural sector. In several other West-African countries, for example in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Nigeria similar developments are taking place (Gibbon, 1992; Guyer, 1987; Losch et al, 1991; Onimode, 1989). Although region specific aspects need to be taken into account, the study has the potential of deepening the insight in this subject within the context of the economic crisis in West-Africa since the end of the eighties. It should be mentioned that, because the study was started in 1994, at the moment only some preliminary results can be presented. The paper focuses on the significance of market-oriented food production for the rural households in the Central Province.

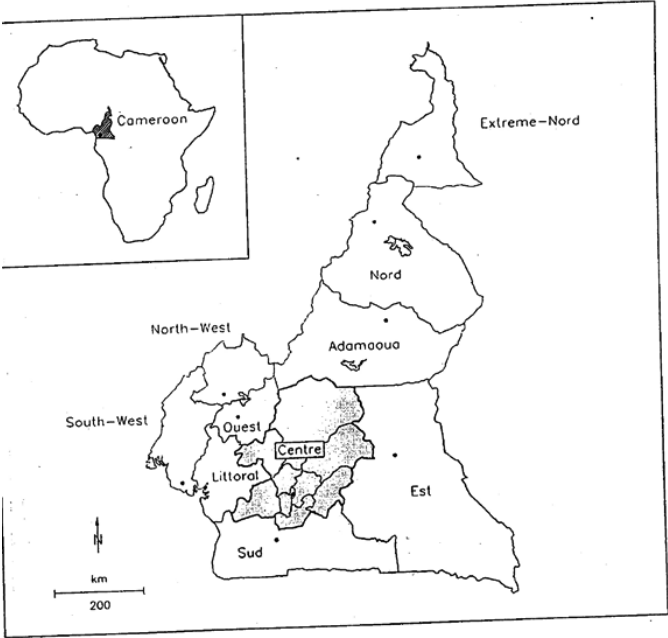
The Study Area: The Central Province

The Central Province, situated in the central part of Cameroon in West Africa, covers an area of approximately 70,000 square km (see map 1). The capital, Yaounde, is located in Mfoundi which lies in the southern part of the Province. The Central Province, along with the Littoral Province, is considered to be the most developed region of Cameroon. However, differences exist in the level of development within the Central Province. The area around Yaounde is most developed. The climate in the region is equatorial; the natural vegetation is tropical forest. As a consequence of human activity (in agriculture and in urban development) the rain forest has

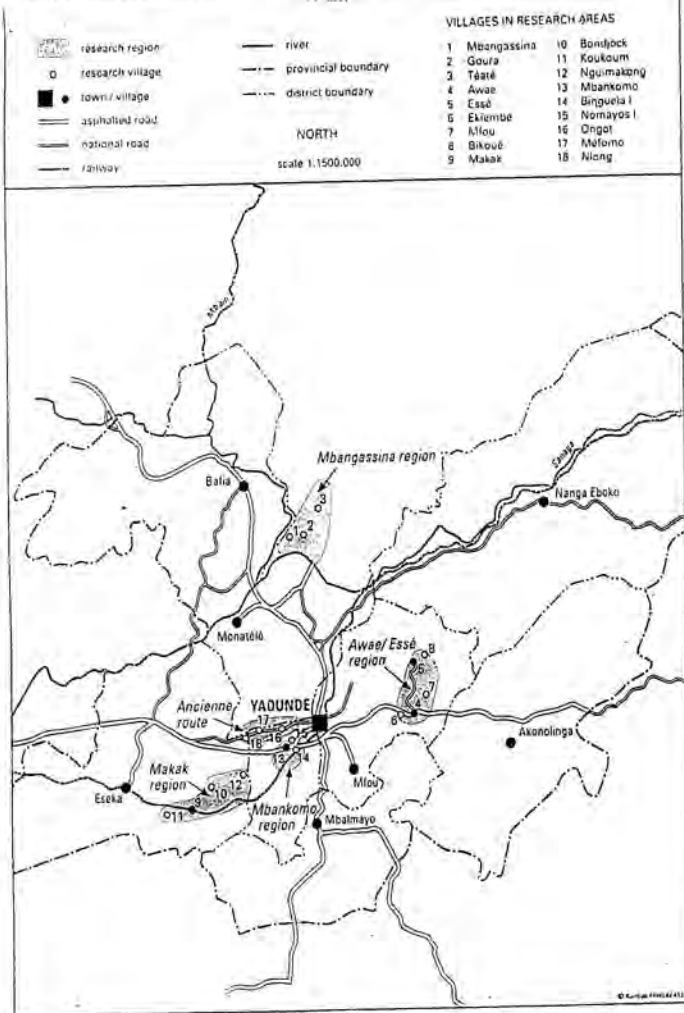
been degraded at several locations. The Central Province has a population of two million people, half of whom live in Yaounde. The average population density is 24 inhabitant/km²/km² (1987 census). The Divisions of Mbam et Kim and Upper Sanaga in the northern part of the province are sparsely populated, whereas the Divisions around Yaounde, Like and Mafia have a relatively high population density: 75 in/km²/km² (1987 census). Since the second half of the eighties, poverty has been increasing in the study area due to the growing pressure on land, the limited availability of non-agricultural employment and a general deterioration of the economic situation in the country. Large numbers of young labourers have been migrating to the cities in search of a better future (Dongmo, 1990). In the last few years, however, the economic situation in the urban areas has seriously worsened and return migration to the rural areas is also taking place (Manga Bella 1994, fieldwork 1994/95).

The agricultural sector has always played an important role in the Central Province. Binet (1954), Gabaix (1965) and Leplaideur (1985) demonstrated that 90% of the rural households obtain their cash-income primarily from agricultural activities, especially from cocoa production. The sector is dominated by the small-scale production of rural households. There are only a few large-scale producing plantations or state farms, mostly directed towards the production of sugar and palm oil. Cocoa is only cultivated by big landowners to a small degree in the sparsely populated Mbam Division. The cropping pattern is diverse: with cash-crops. The most important food-crops are plantain, cassava, macabo, yam, sweat potatoes, maize, groundnuts, vegetables and grape fruit. Cocoa is the most important cash-crop in the region. Other cash crops are palm oil and coffee; although coffee cultivation is mainly concentrated in the western part of Cameroon. The production is capital- and labour-extensive with exceptions in the departments of Like and Mefou, where food. cultivation is predominantly permanent and more intensive. The cultivation of cocoa is relatively labour-intensive during the first few years, while later on, cultivation becomes labour extensive. During the year, harvesting is the most labour-intensive activity of cocoa cultivation (Leplaideur, 1985). Non-agricultural activity is widespread, but limited to small-scale processing of agricultural products, small scale trading or civil service.

ap 1: The location of the Central Province in Cameroon



Map 2: The research locations in the Central Province



Data Collection

From November 1994 to April 1995 fieldwork was carried out in five different regions in the study area, the Central Province. The five research regions were selected on the basis of (1) commercial food production, (2) cocoa cultivation and (3) infrastructure accessibility to the markets and to Yaounde. Within the regions different villages, representative of the region, have been chosen for the survey (see map 2).

1. The *region of Mbangassina* (district of “Mbam et Kim”) in the northern part of the province, 150 km from Yaounde. An agricultural colonization area on the other side of the river Sanaga, which is dominated by cocoa cultivation. The region is located 25 km off the main road to the western part of Cameroon. The villages Mbangassina, Goura and Teate were chosen as representative locations for the region.

2. The *region of Awaé and Esse* (district of “Mefou et Afamba”): A region 60 km east of Yaounde. The population has greed. The soil fertility is low, except at a very few hilly locations, and the cropping pattern is diverse. There is a good road to Yaounde through the region. The villages of Ekletnbi I, Mafia and Bikou, were chosen as representative research locations.

3. The *region of Makak’* (district of “Nyong et Kelle”): a somewhat more remote region, 50-80 km to the southwest of Yaounde. The region is located between the main road and the railway to Douala. Palm oil is the major cash crop. Selected research locations were: Bonjock, Koukoum and Nguimakong.

4. The *region around Mbankomo* (district of “Mefou et Akono”): An accessible region 25 km south of Yaounde along the main road to Douala. The cropping pattern is diverse. Non-agricultural-sources of income are also important. The selected villages were: Binguéla I and Nomayos I.

5. The *region along the former road to Douala* (district of “Nyong et Kelle and Mefou et Akono”): Since 1984, when the new main road to Douala was constructed, a relatively backward region in the western hinterland of Yaounde. Market oriented food production is the main source of income. Research locations were: Ongot, Mefomo and Nlong:

In the 14 selected villages, 463 socio-economic questionnaires were among heads of households. A random sample was taken in each village. The fraction of the samples varied from 15 to 50%, depending on the number of households in the villages. Analysis of the collected data gives insight in

production structures, Significance of sources of income, degree of commercial food production and adaptation of the rural households to socio-economic changes.

Marketing Of Food Crops and Rural Development

Agricultural marketing is defined as an increasing production of food crops for the market. It is generally considered as a process of modernization and rural development. On this process of marketing and its effects a wide choice of literature is available (Hill 1970, Van Lindert 1979, Ghai & Radwari 1983, Hart 1982, Bates 1984 and Hinderink & Sterkenburg 1987). The idea is that agricultural marketing leads to an increase in the agricultural production and subsequently to an increase in rural income. An increasing dependence on the (world) market and; in the case of the increasing production of export crops, a possible decrease in food production are negative aspects of the process. So has a one-sided development of export crops, in many African countries led to a strong dependence on the world market. Hinderink & Sterkenburg(1987), Hart (1982) and Bates (1984) emphasize in this context that the political-economic framework in which the process of agricultural marketing takes place determines, to a significant degree, nature and measure of marketing and rural development. So does the present trend of fluctuating world market prices for agricultural commodities no longer provide a stable basis for agricultural growth and rural development (Chazan & Shaw, 1988)? The production of food for the regional or national market however, is less dependent on world market prices.

The agricultural crisis and food shortages in Africa have resulted in many studies on the production and commercialization of food crops in Sub-Saharan Africa (Henn 1983, Hansen & Mc Millan 1986, Guyer 1987, Chazan & Shaw 1988). Increase in food production may lead to an improvement in food security and, in the case of marketing, to increase in rural household income. In previous work, it was emphasized that in Africa, women are the most important food producers (Boserup 1970; Dankelman & Davidson 1988; Shiva 1989 and the World bank 1989). In Central Cameroon, food production is primarily for self-sufficiency, but to a growing degree also for the market. A major fraction of the production of food crops is handled by women (Henn 1983, Guyer 1987, fieldwork 1994/95). Henn (1983) pointed out that the restricted access for women to social economic resources such as

land, capital and markets are often constraints for increasing marketing. Therefore, gender relations play an important role in the degree of production and marketing of food crops in the rural households. Strategies of adaptation to fluctuating terms of trade for export crops and scarcity of non-agricultural employment in the rural area, may lead to a growing participation by men in commercial food production. In Central Cameroon this would imply a transition from the production of cocoa and coffee to the production of food crops as major cash crops.

On a higher level of scale, increasing commercial food production leads to an increase food supply for urban regions. Food supply for urban areas in Sub-Sahara Africa has also been the subject of much research (Hansen & Mc Millan 1986, Henn 1983, Guyer 1987, Chazan & Shaw 1988). Due to the fact that in Sub-Sahara Africa the demand for food as a result of population growth is only partly compensated by an increase in food production, growing food imports, and food crises occur more frequently. In addition, the growing pressure on land jeopardizes food production. Bates (1984) and Guyer (1987) emphasize the negative role of the administration in food production in many African countries. So have many governments the cultivation of cash crops stimulated above the production of food crops. The pricing policy for food crops was usually aimed at low prices for consumers. For a long time this made the cultivation of export crops more profitable than food crops. Although the food situation in Cameroon is not as dramatic as in some other countries in Sub-Sahara Africa, in some parts of the Central Province total food security does not exist during whole the year (Lewis 1988, leplaideur 1985, Guyer 1987). Therefore, it is of crucial importance to stimulate the commercialization of food production.

The Context of the Economic Crisis

At present, many African countries are going through an economic crisis. Decreasing export returns due to lower world market prices for agricultural commodities and rising costs for import resulted in the eighties in growing foreign debts. In contrast with other African countries, Cameroon had a stable economy until 1986. However, a dramatic decrease in global oil prices, in combination with a sharp increase in the value of the FCFA in relation to the dollar, the unfavourable prices on the world market for agricultural products and liquidity problems in banking also led to the economic crisis in

Cameroon (DGIS, 1992). After 1986, as GNP declined and average population accelerated by 3% per year, poverty increased, both in the cities and in the rural areas. In the cities, unemployment rates increased and incomes decreased. In the rural areas, the effects of the crisis are heavily felt by those households producing cocoa and coffee for the export market. Cameroon like other African countries, is attempting to get its economy back on the rails by means of the Structural Adjustment Program of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In order to qualify for loans needed to finance the restructuring programmes, several conditions given by the IMF and the World Bank need to be met. These conditions include, among others, devaluation of the local currency, privatization of state corporations, abolition of internal price subsidies and liberalization of trade. Much research is being carried out on the effects of such Structural Adjustment Programs in African countries (Commander 1989, Duncan & Howell 1992, Gibbon 1992, Onimode 1989, Ridell 1992, World Bank 1994). In January last year, the FCFA was devaluated by 50% under pressure from the above mentioned IMF and World Bank and the French government. For the urban population this devaluation meant a serious decline in purchasing power: the prices of imported products doubled and the prices of local food increased too, although to a lesser degree (fieldwork 1994/95). This, come when salaries had already decreased in 1992 and 1993 as well. For the rural population, the effects of the devaluation are more positive: local prices for export crops increased and the local food production is stimulated, because imported food increased highly in price. As a consequence, there has been a deterioration of the situation in the cities, return migration to the rural areas takes place (Manga Bella 1994, fieldwork 1994/95). See also Broekhuis & De Jong in these proceedings. In the context of the crisis and further development it is important to boost national food supply and sources of income of rural households.

Cocoa in Crisis

As cocoa is the most important cash crop in the Central Province, the significance of marketing of food crops in rural households cannot be analyzed without taking into account the recent crisis in the cocoa sector. In the Central Province, the cultivation of cocoa is mainly concentrated in the districts of "Like" and "Mbam et Kim". In the densely populated district of

Like, land is relatively scarce. Santoir (1992) noted an average acreage of 2.0 ha of the cocoa plantations in 1985 in this region. In the district of Mbam et Kim land is still relatively abundant. The research data showed an average acreage of 6.5 hectares of the cocoa plantations in the Mbangassina region against an average of 4.5 hectares for all the interviewed cocoa farmers.

The increasing supply of cocoa since the end of the seventies has led to decreasing prices on the world market (EIU, 1989). Until 1989, the ONCPB guaranteed the farmers in Cameroon a price even higher than the world market price. In 1989, however, the ONCPB was no longer able to guarantee these prices. Consequently, the price of cocoa paid to farmers declined drastically from 425 to 250 FCFA/kg that year. In 1993 the price had fallen to an average of 167 FCFA/kg (fieldwork 1994/95). In the framework of the Structural Adjustment Programme the marketing of cocoa was liberalized.

The decline in cocoa prices has had a catastrophic impact on the livelihood of the rural households. Losch et al (1991) demonstrated that for many cocoa cultivating households the price fall has resulted in an average decrease in cash income of 50-60%. Expansion of the cultivated area or intensification of crop production are needed to guarantee a constant cocoa income. For many young farmers, the cultivation of cocoa had become less attractive. They migrated in large numbers to Yaounde, (Losch et al. 1991).

However, since the devaluation of the FCFA in January 1994, cocoa has become profitable again. Up to now, most studies dealing with the effects of fluctuating cocoa prices for rural households have been of a speculative nature only. Lewis (1988) for instance, pointed out that households would continue to cultivate cocoa, notwithstanding the price; falls, because of the guarantee of an income on the longer term. Losch c.s, (1991) mentioned in his study on the strategies of adaptation of cocoa farmers to the economic crisis, that farmers in the Mbam Division would compensate the price. fall by extending the area under cocoa cultivation. The farmers in the districts of Like and Mefou however, would be forced to diversify their cropping pattern and activities, because further extension of the area under cultivation is no longer possible in these <tensely populated areas. Several authors consider commercial food production as an alternative cash income for the cultivation of cocoa (Leplaideur, 1985; Lewis, 1988; Losch et al. 199~).

The research data indicate that in the research areas, 58% of the cocoa cultivating households had continued to maintain their cocoa plantations since 1989; most of them live in the regions of Mbangassina, Mbankomo and

Awae/Esse. Of the cocoa farmers, 36% had abandoned their cocoa farms; most of them live in the Makak region: In this region many farmers changed from cocoa to oil palm cultivation. Others not change their production pattern drastically. Instead of maintaining the cocoa, they either gave more assistance to their wives on their fields or did nothing. Only a very few farmers changed from the cultivation of cocoa to the cultivation of food crops themselves. As has been prospected by other authors, few cocoa farmers had indeed cut down their trees. The contribution of the cocoa-income to the total cash income of the cocoa cultivating households had in 1993/94 decreased to 16% (fieldwork 1994/95). Since the devaluation, however, the cocoa price increased to an average 'of 450 FCFA per kg in 1994/95. The majority of the farmers who had neglected their cocoa plantations during the last few years, have started to resume maintenance. Only 5 percent of the cocoa farmers had the intention of continuing the maintenance of their cocoa plantations in the future. With the higher price for cocoa, the significance of cocoa in the total cash income increased also.

Significance of Commercialization of Food Crops

The Central Province cannot be described as the granary of Cameroon, but the region certainly produces an enormous quantity of food. Manioc, macabo and plantain are sold on a large scale. The marketing of vegetables and fruit is increasing. In the early eighties the Central Province took care of about 50% of the food production for Yaounde (Leplaideur 1985, Santoir & Bopda 1995). The other 50% mainly from the Western Province. Marketing of food crops gives most of the rural households in the region a basic and, regular cash income. In the five research regions in the Central Province, the following production structures and characteristics of market oriented food production were identified (fieldwork 1994/95). In the region of Mbam et Kim, the cultivation of cocoa is regarded as a major source of income. However, if we look at land use and the contribution to total cash income, the cultivation of food crops is at least as important. The region can be characterized as a region with a young and dynamic population, and with a relatively high average total cash-income of rural households: 450.000 FCFA in 1993/94 and 580.000 FCFA in 1994/95 (fieldwork 1994/95). The population of the area of Awae/Esse is older and less dynamic. The production structure is diverse: cultivation of cocoa in combination with

coffee and food crops. Marketing of food crops is limited in the majority of the villages (Rapport annuel 1.993/94,. Delegation d'arrondissement de l'agriculture d'Awae et d'Esse 1994). However, in the more fertile hilly areas, macabo and plantain are being produced and sold on a larger scale. The good road between Yaounde and Akonolinga gives most of the region good access to Yaounde. Non-agricultural employment in Yaounde or along the road is important in the region. However, since the devaluation a large number of people discharged from their jobs and have fallen back on agricultural activities. The region of Makak is dominated by oil palm cultivation. Assistance is given by SOCAPALM or the catholic mission in Otele. The cocoa cultivation is limited. Commercial food production is concentrated along the Yaounde-Douala railway. In the more remote parts of the region the roads are being improved. The region around Mbankomo is highly dependent on Yaounde for the marketing of food crops and non-agricultural employment. Cocoa cultivation is limited. In the region along the former main road to Douala, commercialization of food crops is the main Source of income. Cultivation of export crops is limited. Non-agricultural employment is relatively important. Since the construction of the new road to Douala in 1984, the accessibility of the area along the former road had deteriorated drastically.

Market-Oriented Food Production

Marketing of food crops requires a certain demand for food, either from the region or from the nation, or from abroad. Within the study area, the demand for food is low: the households are self-sufficient to a great extent. The demand for food comes mainly from the urban population in Yaounde. The export of food is mainly directed to other African countries like Gabon and Nigeria. For a long period of time the government paid relatively little attention to the production of food. Higher priority was given to the production ,of export crops because of the attractive foreign exchange earnings (Lewis, 1988). During the last few decades, the demand for food from the capital has increased strongly. In 1964, the capital had 110.000 inhabitants only; in 1987 the population had increased to 680.000. At present, it is estimated that over one million people live in the city. Because of the doubled prices of imported food after the devaluation of the FCFA, many urban households changed their daily menu to more local food. The

demand for cheaper, local food was stimulated, although the local products also increased in price.

The production of food crops is, contrary to that of export crops, traditionally an activity of women. Most of the adult women in the region have one or more fields with mixed food crops. Fruit trees are planted around the house. Almost 70% of the households cultivate food crops twice a year: preparations for the first season start in January for the second season in June. Only in cocoa regions as Mbam et Kim, do households often cultivate food crops only in the first season; otherwise they have a shortage of labour during the cocoa harvest period in December. Three quarters of the households in the Central Province sold food crops, that is staples like manioc, macabo, potatoes, plantain, maize and peanuts; vegetables like leaks, onions and tomatoes and fruit. The collected data show that 67% of the interviewed households produced primarily for home consumption and secondarily for the market. Only in 12% of the households was food production intended primarily for the market. So the pure market-oriented food production is limited. The production is small-scale and methods are simple. A shortage of money was the main reason not to use inputs. Others said they lacked the knowledge to use inputs or they said that their land was already fertile. Agricultural extension on the cultivation and marketing of food crops hardly exists or doesn't function anymore.

Within the Central province spatial differentiation in production and marketing of food crops has been found. In the region of Mbangassina, plantain, couscous de manioc and citrus fruit are the main products for the market; in the region of Awae/Esse, plantain and macabo are dominating the market; in the regions of Ancienne Route and Mbankomo the marketing of fruit and vegetables is important. The Nyong et Kelle region doesn't have any evident specialisation of food crops. Mentioned specializations are the result of differences in soil fertility and ethnic traditions (fieldwork 1994/95).

Marketing of Food Crops and Total Cash Income

Looking at the contribution of the different sources of income to the total cash-income of the households, most of the farmers consider cocoa as the most important cash crop. Probably because of the fact that cocoa has one harvest per year which means one, relatively large, cash income at once for the households. Food crops, on the other hand, are being sold over longer

periods during the year. This gives the households a more regular income. Weber (1977) and Guyer (1980) noted more than fifteen years ago, that in the Like and Metou regions, from the beginning of the sixties onward, the fraction of cash income earned by women increased to approximately 50% of the cash income of men. When the production of food for household's consumption was included, the income earned by women would have been equal to that of men. Yet Bopda concluded that in the study area of OCISCA, in the period of the economic crisis to 1990, the contribution of food crops to the total cash income increased enormously at the expense of cocoa (Courage ed. 1994).

In this study also, an attempt is made to estimate the average contributions of different sources of income in the total cash income of rural households. Table 1 shows the percentages of 1993/94, and 1994/95 for the different research regions in the study area. With an average contribution varying between 25 and 50% in 1994/95, food crops (basic food crops + vegetables & fruit) contribute considerably to the total cash-income of households. In the regions of Mbangassina, Mbankomo and Ancienne Route the contributions are even higher than 40%. Especially in the cocoa region Mbangassina, this high contribution is striking. An enormous production of plantain in the young cocoa plantations in Teate and of fruit in general explain the relatively high percentage of 42%.

Table 1: Significance of sources of income in the total cash income of rural households in % per region (1993-95)

	<u>SOURCES OF INCOME (1993/94) and 1994/95</u>				
	BASIC CROPS	VEGETABLES & FRUIT 1)	EXPORT CROPS 2)	NON- ACTIVITIES	N
Mbangassina	(39) 28	(20) 14	(27) 47	(14) 11	89
Awae/Esse,	(32) 27	(6) 5	(24) 34	(38) 34	87
Makak	(23) 22	(6) 4	(52) 57	(19) 17	76
Mbankomo	(28) 29	(14) 12	(29) 37	(26) 22	26
Ancienne route	(21) 21	(30) 28	(18) 20	(31) 31	61

1) Home consumption excluded 2) Cocoa, coffee and palm oil

In the regions of Mbangassina, Mbankomo and Ancienne Route, a large part of the “food income” comes from selling fruit and vegetables. In the Makak area, the income from food crops is relatively low. Important in this context is the fact that the price for palm oil (the major cash crop in this region) was relatively high in 1994/95. SOCAPALM exported a large quantity of palm oil to South-Africa in 1994, so that in Cameroon there was a shortage of palm oil. The price per litre in Yaounde rose from 250 to 750 FCFA in 1994. Now the government has created an export quota for palm oil to prevent a shortage on the national market. In February 1995, the price had already decreased to 250 FCFA/l again. Nevertheless, export crops in the Makak area in 1994/95 still accounted for approximately 60% of the total cash income. Market-oriented food production is of lesser importance in the Makak region.

The relative contributions of income from non-agricultural activities (formal and informal) to total cash income cannot be neglected (10-30%). In the regions with relatively good access to Yaounde, the contributions of non-agricultural income appeared higher: Awae/Esse, Mbankomo and Ancienne Route. Most of these activities are located along the roads (small scale trade) or in Yaounde (civil service).

Even so, the table shows that the percentages of the different sectors in total cash income in 1994/95 have changed towards higher percentages for the average share of export crops. This change is mainly due to the increase in the cocoa price due to the devaluation in 1994. The relative contribution of food crops to total cash income decreased.

The table shows some specialization of sources of income in the five research regions. However, also within these regions differentiation in the mentioned contributions exists. In the Mbangassina region, Mbangassina and Goura are real cocoa villages, while in Teate, plantain is dominating. In the Awae/Esse region, Ekiembi I and Bikou are villages with several sources of income; in the more fertile village of Mafia, however, cultivation of macabo and plantain is dominating. In the other three regions, the differentiation between the villages is less profound. In the Makak region, the contribution of “food income” and “non-agricultural income” is relatively high in the

largest and most accessible village: Bondjock. In the smaller and more remote villages Koukoum and Nguimakong “oil palm income” is more significant. In the Mbankomo region, the number of questionnaires in Nomayos I with reliable data on cash incomes is too low to distinguish any differentiation between the two villages. In the Ancienne Route region there is marketing of vegetables & fruit, and non-agricultural activities are relatively important sources of income in Ongot and Nlong. Probably due to the relatively good access to Yaounde.

Case Studies

Two case studies illustrate the different meanings of commercial food production for rural households in the study area.

Essindi Olinga Michel is the 51-years-old chief of Mafia village in the district of Mefou et Afamba. He is Ewondo and was born in the village; he has a wife and eight children, four of whom stay in Yaounde for education. He has inherited 20 hectares of land from his father. Since 1979 he is cultivating an inherited coca plantation. Furthermore he has a 1- hectare coffee plantations which he abandoned two years ago, because of the low profit. Last year, his wife has cultivated two fields of mixed food crops: one of 1 hectare in January and another one of 0.5 hectare in June. Manioc and peanuts are the main crops. Within the cocoa plantation, plantain and fruit trees are grown. Twice a month the women go via the “open” to Yaounde to sell D” food crops. A small quantity is usually sold to “buyam sellams” in front of the house. (Last year she sold, mainly in small quantities to consumers, 10 bags of cassava, 25 bags of macabo, 4 bags of maize, 40 bunches of plantain and 3 bags of oranges. In total she gained 183,500 FCFA. The women complained about poor sales of cassava. Essindi sold in 1993 194, 640 kg of cocoa at an average price of 200 FCFA per kg (one stock of 150 FCFA/kg and another at 300 FCFA/kg). That gave him 128.000 FCFA. Besides these sources of income, the women earned some money though petty trading. Once a month she goes to Yaounde to sell “batons de manioc” and at home she irregularly sells some “beignets”. In total this gave her 110,000 FCFA a year. Essindi regarded his cocoa as the

most important source of income. With the above ,mentioned sources 'Of income, the family had in 1993/94 a total cash income of 421.500 FCFA. The marketing of food crops accounted for 44% to the total cash income. Cocoa for 30% and cash income from the non-agricultural activities for 26%. However, the increase in the price of cocoa in 1994/95 changed these percentages as follows. With the same production and an average price of 440 FCFA/kg cocoa, Essindi would have earned 281,600 FCFA. This would result in a total cash income of 575,000 FCFA for 1994/95. As a consequence of the change in the cocoa price, the contribution of marketing of food crops decreased to 32%, the percentage for cocoa increased to 49%. Non-agricultural income still accounted for 19%. of the total cash income. Essindi said that, despite the improved price of cocoa, his total revenue in relative decreased last few years, because of the economic crisis and the devaluation. .

Noumba Eone is a 40-years-old Bassa, living with his family in Nguimakong (district of Nyong et Kelle). After training to become a builder Yaounde, he went ,back to his native village. He has a wife and six children. His mother is also a member of the household. Two children are in Yaounde attending school. The family owns 30 hectares of forest land, of which more than 15 are still not cultivated. Noumba has a 15years old cocoa plantation of 7 hectares and a 4-years-old oil palm plantation of 2 hectares. His wife cultivates twice a year two hectares with food crops. She sells her products once. a month to buyam sellams in Otele or in Yaounde; fruit and vegetables are being sold at home. Last year the family sold 5 bags of cassava, 30 bunches of plantain and some vegetables and fruit for a total of 67,000 FCFA. Noumba's wife complained also about the low demand for food. In 1993/94 Noumba produced 600 kg cocoa and earned 85,000 FCFA: he got 150 FCFA/kg cocoa and he paid 5,000 FCFA for inputs. The high-yielding oil palms gave him 400 litres of palm oil and with prices between 250 and 650 FCFA/l, total revenue amounted to 148,000 FCFA. Noumba and his wife also have some non-agricultural activities. The woman goes occasionally to Yaounde to sell "batons de manioc" and she sells once a month "beignets" in the village. This earned her last year 41,500 FCFA. When there is some construction work, Noumba earns some additional income; last

year he earned 20,000 FCFA. All these sources of income made in 1993/94 total cash income for Noumba and his family of 361.500 FCFA. Market oriented food production accounted here, for 18% of the total cash income. The cash crops, cocoa and palm oil, accounted for 64% of total cash revenue. The increased Cocoa price certainly increased his income for 1994/95. Noumba has the intention of enlarging his palm oil plantation in the next few years and. told that in his region, cash crops were of more importance for the cash income than market-oriented food production.

The Marketing of Food Crops

In 1973, when a period of drought led to serious food shortages, the governmental agency MIDEVIV, Food Development Authority, was founded in order to guarantee a stable food supply mainly for the urban population. This organization was responsible for the marketing process through the purchase of the food crops at guaranteed prices and selling them to urban consumers at lower prices. However, it turned out that the organization was not able to compete with the dense network of private dealers. As a result, MIDEVIV was dissolved in 1986 (Lewis, 1988). Food crops for Yaounde are now sold by the food producers or, as in the more remote areas, by local traders: buyam sellams (Dongmo, 1990).

So far, the study of the process of marketing food crops has been limited to a large number of interviews with rural households: food producers. In this, phase of the study, only some in-depth interviews with buyam sellams were held. Below, some preliminary results on the marketing of food crops are presented.

A large quantity of the food crops are being sold on either local markets or on markets in Yaounde; either to buyam sellams or to consumers. Table 2 shows the most important locations for selling of food crops per research village. The existence of good functioning food markets and the accessibility, to food markets seems to be the determining factor in locating. In the more remote villages with food production on a huger scale, like Teate and Mafia, buyam sellams come to the producers to buy the food crops. Women in these villages told however, that it occurs frequently that they have to wait for two or three days for 'passing buyam sellams or a 'taxi-brousse' to transport them to the markets in Yaounde. Ibangassina has a viable weekly-

food market with a lot of buyam sellams from Yaounde. In Makak and Mbankomo the weekly markets are smaller. In these regions it, seems easier and more profitable to go to the markets in Yaounde. In the regions of Awae/Esse and Ancienne Route there are no regional food markets of great importance. Here, the “smaller” food producers sell their food crops to consumers on the local markets and the “bigger” food producers go to the markets in Yaounde. ‘

Table 2: Locations of marketing centres for food crops and buyers* per village

REGION / - village	LOCATION	BUYERS
Mbangassina region		
- Mbangassina	1. at home & in Mbangassina	BS and consumers
- Goura	1. at home 2. in Mbangassina	BS and consumers
- Téaté	1. at home 2. in Mbangassina or Biakoa	BS and consumers
Awae/Essé, region		
- Ekiembi, I	1. in Awae & in Yaounde	consumers and BS
- Mafia	1. at home & in Yaounde	BS
- Bikou,	1. in Yaounde	BS and consumers

Makak region		
- Bondjock	1. at home & in Makak & in Yaounde	BS and consumers
- Koukoum	1. in Makak	BS and consumers
- Ngoumakong	1. at home 2. in Yaounde	BS
Mbankomo region		
- Nomayos I	1. in Mbankomo 2. at home	BS and consumers
- Binguella I	1. at home & in Mbankomo & in Yaounde	BS and consumers
Ancienne route région		
- Ongot	1. at home & local market & in Yaounde	BS and consumers
- Méfomo	1. local market in Méfomo & in Yaounde	BS and consumers
- Nlong	1. local market in Nlong & in Yaounde	BS and consumers

Source: Questionnaires 1994/95

* BS: bayam sellam

The frequency with which women go to the market to sell food crops seems also to depend highly on the distance to a regional (food)market. Table 3 shows the average frequency with which interviewed women visit the market to sell their food crops, in % per village.

Table 3: Frequency of market visits in % per village

REGION / - village	Once a week or more	Once a fort-night	Once a month	Less than once a month	(N)
Mbangassina region					
- Mbangassina	65	27	6	2	100% (51)
- Goura	22	48	22	8	100% (23)
- Téaté	7	47	33	13	100% (15)
Awae/Essé region					
- Ekiembié I	24	40	16	20	100% (25)
- Mafia	6	50	24	20	100% (34)
- Bikoué	17	16	37	30	100% (24)
Makak region					
- Bondjock	4	29	19	48	100% (21)
- Koukoum	73	20	0	7	100% (15)
- Ngoumakong	16	11	25	48	100% (19)
Mbankomo region					
- Nomayos I	50	38	8	4	100% (26)
- Binguella I	63	22	4	11	100% (27)
Ancienne route region					
- Ongot	48	35	17	0	100% (23)
- Méfomo	8	15	69	8	100% (13)
- Nlong	22	22	50	6	100% (18)

Source: Questionnaires 1994/95

Most of the women in the villages of Mbangassina, Ekiemble I, Koukoum, Nomayos I, Binguela I and Ongot visit a food market once a week or once a fortnight. All these villages have a relatively easy access to food markets. In more remote villages like Teate, Bikoue, Nguimakong and Mefomo, most of the women go only once a month to the market. In the direct surroundings of these villages there are no regional food markets of great importance and Yaounde is still more than 25 km away.

Consequently, accessibility to the market remains to a certain degree an important factor for the marketing of food crops. Dongmo (1990) and Guyer (1987) concluded already that a large cross Section of the women in the region were not able to sell their products in Yaounde due to the poor infrastructure in the Central Province. The transportation of food crops is still on a small-scale. Frequently, women organize the transportation to the market together. The main roads leading to Yaounde are full of “opeb” heavily overloaded with food crops and women. In the rainy season the unpaved roads are very slippery and transport from more remote regions to the markets in Yaounde is extremely difficult then. 78% of the households told us that they have serious problems with the transportation of the food to the market. In the first place, they mentioned the poor quality of the roads, which makes the trips long and tiring. Sometimes it takes more than a day to reach Yaounde. Secondly, in a large number of villages, it was mentioned that taxis or “opebs” are rare. This makes to the rotting of food in the villages. The lack of storage facilities for food also causes this problem. Thirdly, transportation often appears so expensive that the final profits for the producers are very low. Women said they frequently could buy only some soap and meat with the money they earned.

Most of the food producers (72%) sell their products individually and not in an organized manner. 80% of the households declared not to have reached any agreements with traders or buyam sellams beforehand. Only some households in the villages Teate (region of Mbangassina), Mafia (region of Awae/Esse) and in the region of Makak said they reached agreements with buyam sellams. These households were all producing one or two staples on a somewhat larger scale. Buyam sellams said that the small-scale nature of the food production in the Central Province makes agreements about regular supply of food difficult. The lack of organization of the marketing is a

serious constraint to more profitable marketing of food crops in the Central Province of Cameroon.

Besides the above mentioned problems with the transportation of food, three quarters of the households said they had about problems with the marketing of the food crops: they complained about low prices and a small demand. In the Mbangassina region for example, the supply of food is enormous; this results in low prices paid by the buyam sellams. When to stimulate marketing of food as a source of income and promote more sustainable economic development, it is essential that the process of marketing be better organized and that a stable demand for food should exist. However, with the frequent complaints of rural households about poor sales, it is still a debatable whether such a stable demand for food exists in Yaounde. The aspects of the supply and demand for food in the study area have to be investigated in more detail.

Conclusions

It has become clear that production and marketing of food means more than just an additional source of income for rural households in the Central Province. It gives the households both self-sufficiency, and a certain basic cash-income. However, within the Central Province, there are differences in the significance of market-oriented food production. The possibilities for other sources of income, soil fertility, access to food markets and ethnic traditions are explanatory factors for these regional differences. Simultaneously, it became clear that the significance of marketing of food changes as a result of socio-economic variables with the devaluation of the local currency. It appeared that since the fall in the price of cocoa in 1989, the significance of commercial food production for the total cash income of the households increased. The cocoa incomes decreased sharply after 1989. A large number of the cocoa farmers neglected their cocoa plantations till 1994 when the local price for cocoa increased again as a result of the devaluation. Since then the cocoa income earned once more significant. In the context of commercial food production, it became also clear that commercial food production is still the reserved domain of women and that only very few cocoa farmers switched to this source of income.

Analyzing the marketing of food crops, it appeared that in the Central Province of Cameroon the lack of a good physical infrastructure and an

efficient organization structure are main constraints to further marketing by rural households. Most of the food producers complained about a low demand for food on the markets (in Yaounde). To, analyze the sustainability of marketing of food crops as a source of income for rural households, the demand for food needs further investigation.

Finally, the problems of food marketing are not limited to the region of the central province. It is desirable to analyze and discuss these problems on the national level, so that a policy for a balanced development of the commercial food sector in different regions of Cameroon can be defined, in order to strengthen the national food security and the livelihood of the rural households.

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¹ My PhD-research focuses on women's management of insecurity and, in particular, their strategies to acquire access to land in Cameroon (van den Berg, forthcoming). A comparison is made between women in the Extreme North, a Sahelian area with many ecological problems, and the fertile and highly commercialized Northwestern Province. Through this comparison, I intend to analyze the impact of state interventions in the local land tenure systems and their different effects on women in the two regions. The research is based on twelve months of fieldwork in Mindif, North Cameroon, from 1991-1993 and five months of fieldwork in the Bamenda region in 1989. The fieldwork has been financed by the African Studies Centre at Leiden, CNWS Research School at Leiden, and NWO.

² In other areas, Fulbe authority was withdrawn from the 'pagan' villages at the mountainous periphery of the Diamar, and autonomous chiefdoms were created under direct French administration. See e.g. Schilder (1994).

³ Bouffe means gulp, globble, like greedy pigs in English.

⁴ RDPC: Rassemblement Démocratique des Peuples Camerounais; UNDP: Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès; MDR: Mouvement Démocratique pour la Défense de la République.

⁵ Due to the uncoordinated opposition, the elections did not alter the power relations fundamentally. The division of seats in the Assembly is: UNDP 68, UPC 18, MDR 6 and RDPC 88. The last two parties formed a coalition government, which enabled the RDPC to remain in power. In October 1992, presidential elections were held and claimed by both Biya and his main

Responses To Socio-Economic And Conjunctural Changes In The Central Province And The Consequences For The Town-Hinterland Relationships

Ali de Jong & Annelet Harts-Broekhuis¹¹⁵

Introduction

The cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity which characterize the Cameroonian situation induced the government in the sixties to adopt a regional approach to planning in order to attain a balanced and integrate development (Ndongko, 1980). Although this objective was repeated pursued in the following five year plans, the desire balanced development did not take place. Especially the Central Province where the national capital, Yaounde, is situated, and the Littoral, with Cameroon's economic centre Douala, are the regions which in economic terms dominate the other provinces. Investment in these regions was much higher than elsewhere and so was economic development.

In this paper we will not go into these regional diversities, but concentrate on integration and diversity within the Central Province. Perhaps more than in the Littoral, the diversity and uneven development characteristic of the country as a whole is retraceable in the Central Province. This region has known a very rapid development going back to colonial times. But this development was above all concentrated in Yaounde city. Although through trickle-down processes the rural surroundings experienced positive developments (resulting in high educational participation, relatively good access to medical and agricultural services etc.), centripetal forces

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blocked the development of a modern (productive, intensive, sustainable) agricultural sector. Integration between town and hinterland have taken place but at the cost of the rural areas. Differences in integration between districts are rather pronounced.

Recently, from 1989 onwards, national policy has been forced to change radically and to adopt structural adjustment measures. Theoretically these measures should attain urban-rural relationships, by diminishing administrative expenditures and by stimulating export production, i.e., agricultural products. There is little information in literature on these aspects of structural adjustment. Azam (1994) refers to the political component of the programs as he states that seek to break bureaucratic power'. As this power in particular is an urban power, one can expect (part of) the urban Society to become a major victim of the adjustment measures. More outspoken is Riddell (1992) who refers to the 'urban bias' of the post independence years which he supposes to be modified by the removal or reduction of the state's redistribution ability. He supposes the quality of life in many towns and cities to fall as the cost of living rises, the provision of services worsens, unemployment increases, wages decline etc., whilst the rural areas benefit to some extent from higher producer prices. Despite these changes, he expects the city to come out better than the rural areas because of the many factors working against them: country roads falling into despair, higher fuel prices which weigh upon the collection costs of rural production, more expensive farm inputs, decline or disappearance of necessary services etc. Indeed many of the evoked aspects are to be found in Cameroon as will be described in this chapter.

This paper focuses on town-hinterland relationships in the Central Province of Cameroon, which are seen as very important in the processes of development and (regional and national) integration. These relationships should get more attention in times of market liberalization and limitation of the states' distributive function. The central question is how the changes mentioned above have interfered with urban-rural relationships?

The Background

Urban Population Growth in Cameroon

In many African countries nation-building and national integration were accompanied by a relatively rapid growth of the capital city. Rural-urban migration was one of the main contributors to this growth. Administration, industrialization and trade were concentrated predominantly in state capitals and attracted people from all over the national territory. As a result, primacy in the rank-size distribution of settlements became a wide spread phenomenon. The population of the capital city of Cameroon, Yaounde, indeed grew rapidly in the decades after independence. In Cameroon however, the urban pattern was more complex because of the presence and growth of the large harbour city Douala, situated in another region of economic importance, the Littoral. Douala also showed a rapid population growth. This growth was mainly based on economic activities related to the port and to manufacturing.

Quite differently, the attraction of Yaounde was associated with the extension of the employment in the civil service, the growing consumer market, the construction activities and educational facilities. Although rather diversified, the economic base of Yaounde still is ultimately dependent on government salaries and expenses. Structural adjustment measures which aim at a withdrawal of the government from many production and service activities could be expected to have a relatively large impact in Yaounde.

Table 1 Population growth of Douala and Yaounde 1976-1991

	1976	198	1991	annual growth 1976-1987%
Douala	637	810	884	2.2
Yaounde	436	649	750	3.7

Source: *Länderbericht Kamerun 1992*

Town-hinterland Relationships

In the processes of national integration and economic development, town hinterland relationships play an important role. The towns can be seen as the nodes in the national fabric where all kinds of flows come together and disperse, consisting of persons, goods, information, knowledge, money etc. A balanced exchange between countryside and town, will be to the benefit of both. In this chapter, two relations between countryside and town out of many will be discussed: rural urban migration and return migration on the one hand, and production and marketing relations on the other.

Rural-urban migration and return migration

A large, although decreasing part of the growing population of Yaounde comes from its hinterland: the Central Province. In 1957 almost three out of every four immigrants in Yaounde were recruited from the Centre-Sud 'region'; for another 13 per cent, the region of origin was the 'West'. Twenty years later the number of migrants from other more distant areas has increased considerably, but still nearly half of the immigrants were coming from the 'Centre-Sud' (Franqueville 1987). During the sixties and seventies, the rural-urban exodus accelerated to such an extent that Franqueville in his famous study 'Une Afrique entre Le village et la ville' titled one chapter 'Vers un abandon des campagnes?' Santoir (1992) also noticed a decreasing number of inhabitants in the two villages Yemessoa and Alen Zalenga in the Lekie district of the Central Province he studied between 1972 en 1982.

In Cameroon -till the mid-eighties-, rural-urban migration of youngsters was a kind of life-style, as is the case in many African countries. Stimulated by relatively high levels of education, mostly young men and also women (Franqueville 1987) were longing to try their luck in town, Yaounde and Douala being the most favourite destinations. Without regard to the degree of population pressure in the area of origin, the extent of the resources was already high; this migration pattern stimulated the development of a kind of 'effective birth right on the family land' for one of the sons, often the eldest or the most appropriate one. According to Santoir (1992) this process can be interpreted as a (new) family strategy in response to land shortage or extensive cropping.

According to migration theory (Ravenstein, Lee 1966), each migration flow or stream has a counter-stream, consisting partly of return-migrants. In Cameroon, this subgroup within the counter movement includes migrants who didn't succeed in town and people whose presence was needed at home, mostly for a family which possesses cocoa plantations; one of the sons, often the eldest one, is then wanted back by his relatives to continue the work on the family land. Return migration may be important in the rural-urban relationships. Return migrants are supposed to disseminate information about new/urban opportunities and to act as powerful agents of change in the communities of origin (Skeldon 1990).

The official government policy during Biya's new deal was aimed at lessening regional inequality. In order to encourage young Cameroonians to take up agricultural work and thereby curb the high rate of migration to the cities, efforts were made by the government to make the rural areas more attractive. Schools, clinics, rural electrification and pipe-borne water projects were introduced in many villages (Takougang 1993). Although these efforts were laudable, they were overtaken by the general crisis and especially by the rural crisis caused by the effects of falling cash crop prices. As long as the differences -in terms of economic promise and available services- between the region of origin (the countryside) and the region of destination (the city) remain large emigration will continue and the counter stream will be weak. The counter stream, however, may increase as a consequence of the return of retired civil servants. In the period after Independence, the civil service expanded substantially. In the nineties, a growing number of the early officials reach the retirement age and many of them will return 'home'. The counter stream may also increase as a consequence of deteriorating economic conditions in town since the economic crisis, and as a probable (temporary) inversion of the postcolonial bias in rural-urban relations.

Agricultural Production and the Urban Market

In colonial times Yaounde was chosen as the capital among others because of its favourable agricultural hinterland. In three decades the rural surroundings have come up to expectations. The Central Province has developed into the most important cocoa production area Cameroon, only recently bypassed by the South West Province (Courade & Alary 1994). The

Central Province also proved to be able to a large extent, to supply the city of Yaounde with food, notwithstanding the city's rapid growth.

The introduction of cash crops took place in the colonial period. In the Central Province the cash crops are cocoa, oil palm and to a lesser degree coffee. These crops are grown for the greater part on small farms. The Cameroonian government has stimulated them because their export earned the state sustained revenues through the levying of export taxes and their, advantage of bringing in foreign currencies. The production of cocoa and coffee made it also possible to build the stabilization fund (the ONCPB) with the difference between the prices on the world market and the relatively low prices paid to the producers. This fund was used by the government for investments in other economic sectors, such as the administration apparatus, the manufacturing industry and the infrastructure, but was also destined for agricultural projects elsewhere. Only a small part of the fund benefited the producers in the form of extension services, credit granting, subsidization of inputs and extension of infrastructure. The low producer prices made a possible intensification of the cash crop production unattractive. Under circumstances characterized by a large supply of land and a limited availability of capital and labour, the extensive production can be justified economically. But it seems very likely that with better producer prices more capital would have come available and that more young people would have stayed in the countryside.

In spite of the low producer prices the farmers did not give up the cash crops for export. Government intervention did not only imply low producer prices but also fixed prices. As a result farmers could count on a certain income in cash. Besides, essential inputs were furnished by state organizations at subsidized prices. The traditional labour division between men and women has played undoubtedly a role in the maintenance of the cash crops-cocoa, coffee and oil palm. These three crops belong to the male domain, while the food crops often belong to that of the female. Such a rather strict gender division of activities is hampering the transition to crops of the other domain. Another explanation of the maintenance of the traditional cash crops which has often been overlooked is the fact that tree plantations may be fructiferous for decades after planting, whilst cutting down in order to use the land for another crop, is a very labour-demanding affair. In case land isn't scarce, aging plantations are a result of above mentioned factors. Although the production of certain cash crops like cocoa,

coffee and oil palm often can be seen as a relic of the past, this is not the case everywhere in the Central Province. In the northern districts of Kim et Mbam, and Inoubou, many young plantations are to be found.

On the small farms in the Central Province, beside cash crops for export, food crops are grown. These food crops used to be for own household or local consumption, but with growing urban demand part of the production has been destined to the market. Although in the past the government has not shown a much interest in food production it has interfered with the food supply of Yaounde, where a large part of its civil servants work and live. Guyer (1987) describes different efforts of the government to get a hold on the supply of food from the surrounding areas. Efforts which generally can be characterized as failures. The food trade is in the hands of a large number of small middlemen, generally women from the area, who purchase small quantities on the rural markets, sometimes at the farm, and transport them by means of 'taxi-brousses' to the capital. In the past these so called buyam-sellams were considered a negative factor which unnecessarily raised the prices on Yaounde's food markets because of their inefficient, small scale and profit-oriented trade (Guyer 1987).

Yet Yaounde is a city where the markets are well provided and where the price level is low in comparison with other large West African cities (Guyer 1987 for the sixties; and observations of the authors in the nineties). In the past, this low price could be explained by the fact that food crops which came on the markets often brought in a surplus income for the households concerned. The main cash income of these households came from cocoa, palm oil or coffee. During the seventies and eighties, prices of food increased on the urban markets (Bopda 1993). The general economic growth combined with the urban population demand may explain this development. The relatively good supply of Yaounde's markets in spite of its fast growing population is also related to the changing price-ratio between the cash crops for export and the food crops. In fact, the urban population has benefited from the falling prices of export products in the hinterland. For these have brought about a partial transition from cash crop to food crop production. Several authors have viewed this process (Bopda, 1993; Guyer 1987; Schnetzler 1987), simply as a concomitant interest in food production by men (Bopda 1993). This transition from cash crop production to food production has not been without problems, especially in recent years when the purchasing power of the urban population has been undermined.

Overproduction of food and low prices on the urban food markets again have been the order of the day (Bopda 1993).

From the above-mentioned, it can be deduced that the government has only interfered with the agrarian sector when this has been in the direct financial interest of the state or when there has been a concern for the food supply of its civil servants. Investments in the development of the rural economy have been very limited. The rural population has reacted to this neglect by adapting the production structure and going for those crops which have yielded the best financial return even when this has been a gradual process: the accent has been shifting from cash crops for export to food crops for the regional market. Another reaction to this neglect has been the rural emigration of young and mostly educated people to town.

Infrastructure and Rural Markets

In the process of urban-rural integration, infrastructure and markets play an important role. After the choice of Yaounde as capital (1909), the colonial infrastructure was gradually complemented with an infrastructure oriented to Yaounde. The revenues from cash crop production and later on from oil have boosted the enormous investments necessary for this expansion. In Yaounde a number of important national transport routes have emerged, some only recently constructed or asphalted: Yaounde-Mbalmayo, Yaounde-Douala (1984), Yaounde-Bafia (1987), Yaounde-Akonolinga (1993). Infrastructure has also been improved by the construction of the railway line from Douala-Yaounde to the North. This improvement in national infrastructure has changed at the same time with the relations between Yaounde and its rural hinterland. Products and services from the city can reach more quickly to Yaounde's markets. Although in general, access has been improved, some villages have remained backward, especially those along roads which are not maintained any longer. This clearly is true of villages alongside the old dilapidated road linking Yaounde with Douala. In the Central Province where access is hindered by, physical constraints like long rainy seasons, large relief disparities and a rainforest vegetation, a location near a good road or railway station is an important advantage in production for the market.

Traditionally, in the central-southern part of Cameroon markets were (Kengne Fodouop 1987). The subsistence production and shifting cultivation

systems made a significant exchange of goods unnecessary. When the population settled permanently in the colonial period and started to produce cash crops, markets came into being. Rural markets may fulfil some important functions, such as the exchange and collection of agree produce and the distribution of industrial goods from the urban-industrial areas or from abroad. The exchange of goods was for long limited by the subsistent character of the agrarian system. Because of ethnic specialization in production, an exchange is possible, otherwise consumption would differ by ethnicity. The collection of goods for the urban consumer gradually became an important function: in particular the collection of food crops for the relatively large and growing urban population. The significance of a market is strongly influenced by its location with respect to road and railway. The increase in the number of markets and the differentiation among them reflect the growing integration of Yaounde and its hinterland.

Until the introduction of the structural adjustment measures, the cocoa trade had its own collection channels. The collection of cocoa in the Central Province took place through SODECAO, a government organization responsible for the maintenance of the cocoa-roads, the organization of cooperatives, the collection of the produce, the supply of inputs and extension services. The oil palm product are collected differently. In the Central Province part of oil palm area was served by SOCAPALM, a government corporation which collects the palm oil for the refinery in Eseka. The farmers outside its collection area have grade their produce (oil, nuts or wine) themselves.

Crisis, Structural Adjustment and Devaluation

The direct causes of the economic crisis which has been haunting Cameroon since the second half of the eighties are for the most part external: the slump in prices of the most important export products of the country in a short period of time: oil and agric products (cocoa, coffee, cotton, palm oil, rubber, tobacco, rice and tea) (Monchy de 1991), and the drop in the dollar exchange rate since 1977 (Alibert, 1992). At first the oil revenues had more than compensated the decreasing revenues from the agrarian exports, but when these oil revenues also dropped (from 1985 onwards) a crisis was born: in just a few years (1986 to 1991) the GNP per capita decreased remarkably from \$374 to \$267 (EIU, 1992/1993). The easy-earned revenues from

preceding years had seduced the country to a high level of expenditure. An extensive government apparatus had come into being with well paid civil servants by African standards. A social service was constructed to the benefit of large parts of the population. Large investments in industry had taken place. This high expenditure level did not come up to expectations. The civil service apparatus was not very efficient (Gilguy, 1992) and the population got used to free or cheap services. The rapid deterioration of the state's revenues from exports put an end to the apparently favourable economic situation.

In 1988-89 the Cameroonian government accepted a program of structural adjustment in a bid to emerge from the economic morass. In 1991 a second adjustment program was accepted. The measures of these structural adjustment programs have had their effects on different aspects of the economy. The consequences for the producer prices and the rural services as well as the consequences for employment will be discussed here.

In the seventies and early eighties the decrease in the producer prices of cash crops was gradual and relative. From 1988 onwards however, the decrease was extremely rapid as a consequence of the official adaptation of the producer prices to the world market. This adaptation was part of the structural adjustment program, but would have taken place anyway because the stabilization fund was empty. This was the result of mismanagement and insufficient reckoning with the possibility of much lower world market prices. For some years, the revenues of the farmers were very limited. It was not until in 1994 that a devaluation of 50 per cent of the country's local currency was implemented. This devaluation theoretically should have led to an increase of 100 per cent in the prices of export crops. The evolution of the prices of food crops was less predictable but an increase in the price could be expected: a larger demand in urban areas for local food crops was possible due to higher prices of imported food; at the same time producers could prefer investing their time in cash crops instead of food crops. The price increase for cocoa, coffee and palm oil which took place at the same time on the international markets made production of the traditional cash crops more attractive. The uncertainties in urban and rural areas with respect to prices and other adjustment measures caused a wave of price increases on which the government had no grip.

The partial or total withdrawal of the government from many economic activities had other consequences for the rural areas as well. In particular the agency charged with the marketing of crops (ONCPB) was dismantled in a

short period of time. Till then farmers were used to fixed prices, the collection of their produce by the official agency (SODECAO for ONCPB in the Central Region), the supply of pesticides insecticides fertilizers and information on new production methods. After the closing-down of ONCPB, farmers had to resume selling their produce to private traders, they had to negotiate prices and look for proper inputs themselves.

The large cutbacks in government expenditures did not cause as much discharges as the numerous general reductions in the salaries of civil servants in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992. In Yaounde this had many consequences on the purchasing power of the total population, the expenditures of the civil servants being essential to a large secondary and (in particular) tertiary sector of the economy. These expenditures diminished rapidly causing the bankruptcy of many formal enterprises. On the other hand, in the informal sector new activities were started (Kengne 1993; Roubaud (1994). It is difficult to say if urban employment decreased; formal employment certainly stagnated (Roubaud 1994), and so did the level of remuneration.

It is to be expected therefore that young people will be less attracted to the city and that (temporary) rural urban migration will lessen. At the same time city dwellers will be more easily convinced to return to their home town, where they often have a land titles. The return migration stream will increase. Elsewhere, in Ghana, one of the effects of structural adjustment was an increasing demand for labour in the cocoa sector (Peace 1992). If this is also the case in Cameroon, a return migration which is more significant than in preceding years is probable.

Responses to the Changing Production and Employment Circumstances in the Central Province

The discussion presented in the following paragraphs is based on the first outcomes of a large scale research among 463 rural households in different parts of the Central Province. Interviews were conducted by geography students from the University of Yaounde and the University of Utrecht under the supervision of a junior researcher from Utrecht. The answers to the questions after production and changes over the last years have to be interpreted cautiously. However for the broad outlines lines the conscientiously collected information is sufficient, reliable. The interviews

have been hold in the period between autumn 1994 and spring 1995, that is in the period after the devaluation of the FCFA.

Changing Migration Patterns

Rural-urban migration probably was weakened as a consequence of worsening economic conditions in Yaounde. However, the research does not allow a quantitative judgment in this respect. What can be said is that during the visits to the countryside in 1994 several young people were met who had not yet returned to the city to continue their classes and who were awaiting more optimistic news from town. Young men were met who otherwise would have been in town, and who decided to take up agriculture temporarily, or who earned some money by hunting. As regards the number of people not leaving as a consequence of deteriorating conditions in the city, the survey did not give any indication. Information was gathered with respect to return migrants. This information refers to a growing return migration from the cities as a consequence of the economic crisis. The return migrants can be categorized in three groups:

- Unemployed workers, who lost their jobs due to the decrease in economic activities (exodus of many foreign businesses and financial institutions, decrease in the number of civil servants, drop in the construction activities in town)

- People who returned for family reasons. In most cases to succeed an older family member

- (father, grandfather or uncle) as head of the family and look after the family property, land)

- Retired workers. Former villagers who returned to their home village after retirement.

A fourth group of migrants which could be classified also as return migrants consists of 'school leavers'. This category includes three types of persons who returned home: firstly, young people who finished their education in town and who didn't find an appropriate job or who returned for family reasons (father old); secondly, young people who had to go home because they or their family run out of money and could no longer pay the relatively expensive school fee(s); At last, a small group which returned home as planned before having finished their studies. Because it was not always possible to establish if the return of these migrants was influenced by the

economic crisis or not, the school-leavers in this study are not included in the group of return migrants.

The number of return migrants among the heads of the interviewed households appeared to be considerable, around 40 per cent. The so-called crisis-migrants, those who returned during the last ten years for reasons of unemployment in town form the largest group with (almost 40 per cent of all the return migrants). The people who returned because of retirement were the second largest group with 25 per cent. In this last group a minority was granted an early retirement a pension. As such they could be reckoned among the crisis-migrants; 20 per cent returned for family reasons.

The return migrants, with some slight exception, all took up agricultural activities. This fall back on agriculture doesn't seem to square with the idea that return migrants could be innovators and bring new initiatives and activities to the rural areas. Even the older return migrants almost all took up some agricultural activities, but many resorted to subsistence farming.

Of course one could expect those migrants to bring with them relations of urban acquaintances. But will these linkages bring about economic gain? From the survey it can be established that many of the return migrants, in general the younger ones, actively engage in food production. And that a relatively large percentage of these producers sell part of their produce on the urban markets of Yaounde, thus bypassing the buyam sellams. Among the younger return migrants many are starting with cocoa or oil palm nurseries, i.e. investing in modern varieties, but because of the long period before fructification the effects often were not measurable. Although these result might apply to a more modern attitude to farming among the return migrants, this was not confirm by a difference in the use of modern inputs. Among the rural producers, return migrants or not, the use of fertilizer for food crops was almost absent, even in the areas where problems of infertile soils exist.

Changing Rural Production

In the crisis years preceding the survey (1989-1994) rural revenues decreased for the majority of the households, and this in spite of an extension of the food crop production for sale. The most important factor in this decrease was the low cocoa price between 1988 and 1994. Another factor was the decreasing contribution of non-agricultural revenues.

In, 1994 cocoa was still a major cash crop for a large number of the households interviewed, immediately followed by food crops for sale. Although more than half of the producers continued producing cocoa during the crisis, a third gave up. That does not imply that they cut their trees, only one per cent of the producers took such a drastic measure. The majority of the these producers reduced or even stopped labour or/and capital investment in cocoa production and neglected the plantation.

The sharp increase in the prices of cocoa caused by the devaluation in 1994 and the high world market prices, an increase sometimes of more than 300 per cent from 150 FCFA in 1993 to 600 FCFA only one year later), made half of the farmers reconsider their decision to give up. Two-third of the cocoa farmers reacted positively hoping that the high prices would be sustained. This positive reaction entailed recommencing work on existing plantation (32%), the planting of new seedlings (45%) or the investment of more labour in maintenance and harvesting (28%).

A conclusion which comes to the fore is that the majority of the cocoa producers do react to changing prices. They do not cut the trees, not only because that demands a lot of labour but also as a conscious strategy in order to take advantage of possible future high prices. These prices should last for some years at least to pay back the extra labour input required to reactivate a neglected orchard. That most of the farmers act according to a certain strategy could also be deduced from the fact that the age of the cocoa trees varies enormously. In the literature the aging of the cocoa plantations is often cited as one of major rural problems of the Central Province. The research outcome is that indeed many of the cocoa farmers (15%) have old trees, trees reatare more than 40 years old on more than 75 per cent of their 'cocoa surface'. In fact these are plantations which in the near future will no longer produce. On the other hand 45 per cent of the farmers have young trees (younger than five years)! Half of those farmers have more than 25 per cent of their 'cocoa surface' with young trees. The majority of the farmers have trees in different age categories. This outcome clearly indicates that many farmers went on planting young seedlings even in periods of low prices. From the interviews it becomes clear that in particular the households in the active phase of life want to invest in cocoa.

In the Central Province oil palm production is also an important cash crop. For 14 per cent of the households it even is the main source of income. The reaction of palm oil producing households to the crisis was not

surveyed. But from the interviews and from oral information gathered during research visits to the southern part of the Central Province it appears that a general transition has taken place from cocoa to palm oil and palm nuts. A significant demand has arisen on the national market. The devaluation of the FCFA has made import of cooking oil a lot more expensive and local palm oil has been able to regain part of the local market. Of all the households interviewed two-fifth have oil palms. But most of these palms are traditional varieties, partly growing spontaneously as secondary vegetation. In those cases the production is extensive. One-fifth of the households that produce oil palm cultivates modern varieties. Besides, one-tenth has planted new seedlings, which indicates some confidence in the future of this crop as a market crop. Most of the households with oil palms sell their produce, or part of it, on the market. Apart from the oil (in most cases) or the nuts, households may also sell the wine which can be tapped from the palm trees. The devaluation has caused a price increase of industrial alcoholic drinks, especially beer. Demand for local alcoholic drinks like palm wine has grown accordingly. People mentioned the relatively high prices of this product.

Besides agrarian activities the rural households are engaged in non-agricultural activities as well. For one fifth of the interviewed households these non-agricultural activities by members living at home supplied the main source of income. But also as a secondary activity non-agrarian activities were often mentioned. These activities have been affected during the last years. Demand for services and products slowed down as a consequence of the general decreased purchasing power. Carpenters, mechanics, electricians etc. complained about the small number of commissions and the low remuneration. Women complained about a more fierce competition when selling their processed agricultural products like 'baton de manioc' or 'beignets' on the local market. Some households said they started such an activity to make ends meet, whilst others retreated from the same activity because it no longer brought in an interesting income. Apart from crafts and processing activities there were also some rural households (<5%) which obtained their main revenue from civil service activities. Their revenues have been very much reduced through several salary decreases. The relatively young households among them were intensifying the production of food crops and some were planting cocoa or palm trees.

It can be concluded that the crisis and in particular the devaluation has caused a lot of unrest and uncertainty in the rural areas. Some activities were

better remunerated, in general the cash crop production activities; other activities were less rewarded, in general the urban activities and those of the secondary and tertiary sector in the countryside. These changing rewards have made the rural areas mostly 'agrarian'

However, this does not mean less contacts between town and hinterland. The volume of product flows may have been affected by a lowering of the buying capacity in town and hinterland but both have remained complementary. The slow cautious recovery of the cocoa which is increasingly oriented to foreign markets is compensated by a growing production of palm oil for the urban market and a larger dependency of urban consumers on locally produced food.

Spatial Differences In Production and Migration Patterns

The above outlined trends differ according to the spatial context. The research areas were chosen in order to represent the variety specific to the Central Province. Five regions were studied (see figure 1):

- The Mbam and Kim region where land is relatively abundant and the population is relatively young. Three locations were chosen in Mbam & Kim with varying access to infrastructure: Mbangassina, Goura and Teate.

- The Awae-Esse region where land is not scarce, but sometimes rather infertile and where the population has aged. This is an area where cocoa production used to be important. Recently Awae has been linked with Yaounde by an asphalted road. Again research locations were chosen with varying access to infrastructure: Ekiembe, Bikoue and Mfou.

- The Makak region where land is still available. Traditionally oil palm exploitation is very important. Cocoa was introduced as a cash crop. Research locations were Bondjock, Nguimakong and Koukoum.

- The region along the old road from Yaounde to Douala. In this region pressure on land is high and the population aged. The once good connection with Yaounde has been neglected. Research locations were: Ongot, Metomo and Nlong.

- The Mbankomo region near Yaounde. Non-agrarian activities are more important here than in any of the surveyed regions and because of other lacunae this region is more or less left out of this study.

Spatial Differentiation in Migration Patterns

The Mbam region is an immigration area, and as a consequence the migration pattern of the villages in the Mbam region differed most from that of the other investigated areas around Yaounde. The Mbam region is a rather recent agrarian colonization area, but as the research illustrates the villages in the Mbam region vary considerably in terms of population composition, places of origin of the immigrants and recent migration pattern. The village of Teate is a recent settlement. The first settlers founded the village at the end of the seventies but nearly 60 per cent of our respondents just settled during the last ten years. Almost all immigrants were originating from the Lekie district-known for its relatively high level of population pressure. Most of these immigrants (70%)-who live in Teate all earned their living as cultivators - reported a former job outside this sector. Several of them moved at first from the Lekie district to the city (Yaounde) or sometimes to little towns such as Saa and Obala before they migrated to Teate. These rural-urban-rural migrants are a special kind of 'return' migrants: they didn't return to their home village, but returned to the rural roots by moving to an agrarian colonization area.

The inhabitants of the settlement of Mbangassina were in the majority originating from the same sub-district as the village. Only one out of every five heads of household reported another sub-district as place of birth. Between 1965 and 1975 immigrants from the Bamenda region settled in Mbangassina, but also people from Bafia and places from the other side of the river Sanaga moved in. In the last 10 years only few new migrants arrived-probably as a result of the lack of available land nearby-among them only two return-migrants. Both returned to Mbangassina after an educational period in Yaounde. The other recent immigrants could be classified as crisis-migrants. The third village in the Mbam area, Goura, had a very mixed population. Most immigrants moved in from neighbouring districts like Bafia and Lekie. Of the 45 interviewed heads of households, 55 per cent were immigrants, only 10 per cent were return migrants. The eldest immigrants arrived in the late forties, the most recent ones in the nineties. The counted return migrants (school leavers in majority-) also re-settled recently.

The analysis from the migration flows to the Mbam region confirmed the strong linkages of this district with the district of Lekie. These relations are relatively old (see Franqueville 1973) but as our research showed new

immigration still goes on. Leaving the home village and moving to less populated areas north of the Sanaga is not an adventure. As Franqueville remarked (1973) 'il Y a toujours un parent pour accueillir, héberger'. Lots of immigrants bring with them experiences and knowledge acquired in different places including big cities and small towns. This fact together with the co-habitation of people of different ethnic groups may contribute to the development of a more open and integrated society in the Mbam Region.

In the Awae-Esse research region and in the Makak region, immigrants from other districts were rare. Except for some women who moved in from villages nearby or even distant districts for reasons of marriage, the immigration stream was made up of return migrants. The percentage of return heads of households was higher in the Awae-Esse region in comparison to that of the villages in Makak. This difference can be a result of the more close-knit links between the Awae-Esse region and Yaounde. Perhaps infertile soils partly explain why more people have left for Yaounde in the past. In both areas, the crisis-hit and retirement migrants outnumbered those of the returning school leavers or people who returned for family reasons. Among the return-migrants who re-settled in the nineties in the Awae-Esse region, retirement migrants dominated. These former civil servants often were still in their fifties. They profited from early retirement possibilities the government proposed in order to limit the number of civil servants. They returned with their families to start a new life in their former home villages, where they, like most other return migrants, became cultivators (again).

Spatial Differentiation in Production

The Central Region has been considered for long as the first and most important cocoa region of the country. For many households in the region, however, cocoa is no longer the main source of income. Only in Mbam does cocoa hold its pre-eminent position. In the Awae-Esse region and along the old road to Douala, the sale of staples has become the most important source of income, in the Makak region the sale of oil palm products, and near Yaounde mostly non-agricultural activities bring in the main income. Often cocoa is now the second most important source of income for the households concerned. Along the old road to Douala, cocoa has very little significance. The aging of the cocoa plantations and the low cocoa prices in

the eighties stimulated some differentiation between the districts of the Central Province. The most clear change is the transition from cocoa to oil palm as a cultivated crop in the Makak region. Oil palm exploitation always was very important but most of the time these oil palms were spontaneous secondary vegetation. Now it is observed that farmers start with oil palm nurseries. There is a significant increase in food production at the expense of cocoa production in the regions with good access to Yaounde: the Mbankomo region, along the old road to Douala and in the Awae-Esse region. In Mbam little change in the production structure took place, apart from an extension of the surface under agricultural production.

For the marketing of the products, a regional production specialization could be of interest, especially under circumstances of low population density and low productivity. The continuous changing price ratios between the main products however, makes a consequent regional specialization almost impossible. The prudent regain of cocoa in the old cocoa districts (Awae-Esse, Makak, and alongside the old road to Douala) as a reaction to the high prices since the devaluation illustrates this problem.

Spatial Differentiation in Marketing

In the literature on food marketing in the Central Province, the presence and importance of the middlemen, the so called buyem-sellams, between rural producers and urban consumers has been stressed (Guyer 1987). For that reason it was a surprise to note that in the studied regions many food producers themselves brought part of their produce to the Yaounde markets. Even in the far-away Mbam region, there were some producers who went regularly to Yaounde to sell their produce. Of course this phenomenon was more present in regions near Yaounde, like the Awae-Esse region and the region along the old road to Douala (see table 2). The Makak region had an in-between position: in some villages the phenomena was found, in others not. When people live in or near a place where a regular market is held and which is visited by a number of traders, mostly they sell at that local market. Mbangassina performed this function for food crop sales in the Mbam research region and for its own inhabitants, Awae, and to a lesser degree Esse for the Awae-Esse region and Makak for the Makak region. A third possibility of sale is at home or on the field to passing traders. The same

household sold often in different ways: to passing buyem-sellams, on local markets and sometimes on the Yaounde markets.

Cocoa producers almost always sell at home. Sometimes they organize in groups to sell larger quantities. Only in the Makak region selling in a group was rather frequent (40% of cocoa producers). Also the producers of palm oil or nuts and wine were selling most of time at home to passing-by traders. Sometimes they sold at the local market and very exceptionally at the market of Yaounde.

The fact that producers sometimes went themselves to the urban markets reflects the rather high price differences between producers and urban consumers. It reflects also a certain access to urban networks: it can be established that return migrants who were active in food production were somewhat more oriented to the urban markets than the general rural producer: they more often sold their produce personally on the urban markets in order to get better prices.

The growing importance of food and palm oil production in the rural areas of the Central Province had interwoven the interests of rural and urban groups more than before. The fact that rural producers themselves sometimes sold on the urban markets gave them a better insight in urban demand and prices. Although under the given circumstances this may appear a good strategy, this performance indicates an inadequate functioning of rural markets, especially with respect to food. Complaints about unstable stocks were frequent and are not new, With respect to cocoa and palm products the buying-up seems to encounter less problems. It has to be admitted that the research was done in a period with good prices for cocoa and palm oil. Complaints were not to be expected under such circumstances.

Table 2 Producers who sold personally part of their produce on the urban markets as percentage of total producers of the crop*

Food produce Cocoa Oil-palm tree products oil nuts wine	
Mbam region	
Goura:	15%
Teate:	28%
Mbangassina:	8%
Awae-Esse region	

Mfou:	80%			
Bikoue:	60%			
Ekiembe	64%			3%
Makak region				
Bondjock:	28%		27%	
Koukoum:	6%	1%	23%	
Nguimakong:	65%	16%	27%	22%
Ancienne Route				
Ongot:	95%			
Mefomo:	63%			
Nlong:	50%			

* with a threshold value of 8 households Source: research data

Conclusions

The above-described changes in production, marketing and migration give the impression that rural producers continuously adapt to changing price structures. This adaptation manifests in the volume of the rural-urban migration flow and its counter stream, and in the amount of labour invested in the cocoa plantation, in the production of palm oil and other palm products or in food production.

The changing economic relationship between town and hinterland caused a forced return migration to the rural areas more significant than otherwise would have taken place. In periods of economic growth the city had skimmed the rural areas of their promising youth, but when the tide turned these migrants returned to their places of origin. Some of them returned with specific professional knowledge or networks in town, but all take up agricultural activities as before. Only in the way the younger return migrants are somewhat more active in bringing their produce to the urban markets and in investing in cocoa and oil palm nurseries, they seemed to be a more dynamic factor in rural production. Research specifically focused on this group would be of interest.

The production structure in the rural areas has been influenced by a long period of declining cocoa prices, which caused a gradual neglect of cocoa production at the benefit of food and oil tree crops. The large price increase

of cocoa due to devaluation and better international prices brought about renewed interest in cocoa production. Because these crops require different production knowledge, organization, marketing etc. a complete change in production system is not attractive for most farmers. As far as perennial crops are concerned such a change is an almost hazardous undertaking. For that reason many producers maintain an extensive and often diversified production system aimed at risk avoidance. However, these production systems hamper the development of a modern, productive and specialized agricultural sector so badly needed (EIU 1994).

In the long run, this situation is neither beneficial for the rural producers, nor for the urban consumers or for the country as a whole. The government should sustain in a direct or indirect way a certain specialization in regional production. This enables extension services and marketing to be more effective and remunerative. In the past, government action was concentrated in particular on the cocoa production. Structural adjustment policy has obliged the government agencies to withdraw from price stabilization, monitoring and buying up. But some policy is needed in the long run, not only for an interesting export product but for rural production in general. Although young people probably will go on and spend some years of their life in town, these experiences with urban life should be integrated in a more modern agriculture which makes higher demands upon their capacities.

The relations between rural and urban areas are manifold and have changed under influence of the economic crises. People with urban incomes returned to their rural origins often taking up cultivation activities, and rural people with non-agricultural incomes were investing more time in agricultural production thus making the rural areas more dependent on agrarian incomes. However, investing in rural production should not only be a distress solution for the national government.

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End Notes

1. The 'Centre-Sud' region has been divided into the Central and South Provinces.
2. As expected the number of school leavers was limited among heads of households. In general, young school leavers are not yet married.

Land Disputes And The Impact On Disintegration In Contemporary Western Grassfields: Case Study Of The Ndop Plain Chiefdoms¹¹⁶

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Introduction

It is indisputable that from May 1990 when multi-party politics was re-instituted in Cameroon and about a year or more after the results of the October 1992 presidential elections were published, the North West Province (NWP) hit the headlines. During the course of the past two years; the numerous reports in the mass media from this part of the country have been on inter-chiefdom land disputes or what is commonly described as the “NW Tribal Wars” and politics. However, it is widely believed that the government has a hand in the emerging instability leading to the lack of confidence in the State apparatus that is observed In the region today. This position is captured by *The Herald* in the following words:

“In the inter-tribal wars of recent months, evidence pointing to probable government involvement has been too strong to mislead anybody: assaulted villagers, for instance, are known to cry out in

¹¹⁶ The bulk of the field research was conducted in the Ndop Plain in 1989/90. The collection and reconstruction of additional data took place during repeated visits to some parts of the North West Province between March 1994 and July 1995. It was made possible by the former Institute of Human Sciences in Yaoundé and supplementary grant from the WWF-Cameroon for a consultancy.

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vain for help. If gendarmes come, they come much too late ... How do government ministers who should encourage peace and harmony undertake to instigate the questioning of long-settled boundary disputes - the source of many violent conflicts?" (The Herald No.231, 1995: 4).

It is possible to argue from the above quotation that some of the disturbances result from the growing populations and a new awareness of the shortage of arable lands and good pastures. Others are also instigated by some politicians and ambitious traditional authorities who are seeking the spells of power or want to participate in what the French political scientist, Jean Francois Bayart, has described as "*la politique du ventre*" (Bayart, 1989).

This lure of government patronage by Chiefs or *Fons* entails contradictions and threats to regional peace and unity in the emerging circumstances of competitive politics. The contradictions inherent in the political patronage of the ruling Cameroon People . Democratic Movement (CPOM) political party once made explicit, provide the necessary starting point for a critique of the Cameroonian democratic process.

This paper examines the relationships between farmer-grazier conflicts, on the one hand, and inter-village outrageous wars resulting from claims and counter claims of use rights and sometimes ownership of patches of land on the other. The social consequences are the fuelling of hatred and disorder in the Ndop Plain chiefdoms or the Ngoketunjia administrative division, created by presidential decree No. 92/207 of 5/10/92. The implications of the disputes can be extended to the observed decrease in agropastoral productivity, environmental degradation through misuse and over exploitation and the short- and long-term effects on the living standards of inhabitants in that area, in particular, as well as other victims and refugees in the Cameroon Grassfields in general (Mope Simo, 1992; 1994).

Two types of land disputes are addressed in this work. They have different causes and effects. From a historical viewpoint the farmer-grazier conflicts date back to the colonial era, that is, as far back as 1917 when the Fulani first entered the Bamenda area with cattle (Kaberry, 1960). Such conflicts often involve individual cattle owners (men) and farmers, most of whom are women. These economic producers are in search of good land for pasture and cultivation. The point must be made that farmers often make complaints that when there is a conflict, administrators are quick to take

sides with the graziers. But there is no evidence that cattle breeders have ever enjoyed sustainable livelihood security¹¹⁷ in the NWP.

It is also useful to mention here that the whole region under study is so vulnerable to farmer-grazier conflicts, that administrators usually shy away from such sensitive and highly politicized issues. This often makes for a lot of bribery and corruption in settling land disputes. This situation has important implications for the present study. There is an abundant literature on farmer-grazier conflicts in the Western Grassfields and how they have made it difficult to create the basis for peaceful co-existence (UNO, 1950; Kaberry, 1960; Njeuma and Awasum, 1989; Mope Simo, 1992).

With regard to the inter-chiefdom differences, apart from the increasing levels of violence caused by the Chamba, Bamoum and Fulani expansion raids of the nineteenth century on the Ndop Plain chiefdoms (Nkwi and Warnier, 1982: 127-129), the sort of interchiefdom land disputes which are experienced in the area at the present time can be described as having a relatively more recent history. Usually such frictions involve whole communities and the aggression against each other does not go on for a long time. However, they engender much greater social, economic and political repercussions; this is relevant to my thinking about regional instability and disintegration. With the exception of the sort of journalistic reports quoted in this research, hardly have any systematic studies been carried out on the problem of land-related “tribal wars”, at least as far as the Ndop Plain area is concerned. The case materials presented in a later section of this work, focus on the latter type of violence. This is because of the more serious social, political and economic issues involved.

The description uses four paradigms to explain the recent wave of violence over land: (1) land scarcity; (2) demographic dynamics (population increases and migrations); (3) market forces and politics; and (4) the commoditization of agriculture (Anye Forcob, pers. comm.). These factors

¹¹⁷ The concept of ‘sustainable livelihood security’ is an integrating term which involves population, natural resources management, environment and development. According to Barbier and McCracken, “A household may be enabled to gain sustainable livelihood security in many ways - through ownership of land, livestock or trees; rights to grazing, ... or through varied repertoires of activities” (1988: 15).

are putting changing pressures on traditional land right arrangements. They also cause a growing tendency towards private property ownership in the urban areas but less so in the countryside. The latter process is now finding legitimization as a direct result of the implementation of the 1974 land laws as we shall see later on. These changes jeopardize the stability and security of farmers and challenge cattle owners rights to land. Experience in Cameroon has shown that the introduction of individual property rights is not necessarily a guarantee for land security and economic progress and sustainable management practices (Mope Simo, 1992). The analysis also considers the reinforcement of social differentiation; but this is on a non-gender basis.

This research was guided by the following theoretical premises: social and political causation as crucial indicators. The causes of the land disputes, presently faced by the inhabitants of the NWP are fundamentally social. On the one hand, land conflicts result from patterns of human activity, modes of economic production, distribution and accumulation that have been ongoing for centuries, or are changing and increasingly the ambitious attitudes manifested by some local traditional dignitaries close to the ruling party: Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) on the Arguably, the leadership of. this political party has been playing the role of a political patron. Such actions will be analyzed in terms of their possible consequences for instability and disunity in the region under study.

One major hypothesis occupied my thinking during this research process. The chronic conflicts and relatively new wars over land in the Western Grassfields are one of the best factors that could be used to explain the intolerance, disunity, regional imbalance and national disintegration there today. The concept of. disintegration is used here in the broadest sense to refer to social, economic and political divisions which are obstacles to the processes of change and development.

The Regional Context

The Ndop Plain is a peripheral area stuck into the centre-north-eastern part of the NWP. The latter covers an area of 17,400 km² and is next only to the neighbouring West Province (13,890 km²) as the smallest of the ten provinces in the country. There are great similarities between the Western and Eastern Grassfields. Some of these traits include the, physical smallness,

cultures, high human population densities and pressures on land. By the late 1980s it was estimated that 59% of the land in the NWP was controlled by cattle breeders (Njeuma and Awasum, 1989).

The official result of the 1987 general census put the population of the NWP at 1.2 million with an annual growth rate of 3.2% (MINPAT, 1988); about 78% of this population lived in the rural areas. According to the same census there were 130,148 inhabitants in the Ndop Plain, of which 112,890 or 86.74% were in the countryside¹¹⁸. They are from Tikar, Ngemba, Chamba, Moghamo, Hausa and Fulani origins. Despite this ethnic diversity, they have cultures which are interrelated; and speak numerous dialects as their mother tongues. Although Standard English and French are used in administration and education, pidgin English is the *lingua franca* here as everywhere else in Cameroon.

The Ndop area comprises thirteen village-chiefdoms which lie within the range of “centralized chieftaincies” of the Western Grassfields. These chiefdoms vary greatly in size, historical origin, language and the level of economic development. The densely populated ones are Bali Kumbat (20,762), Bambalang (19,170) and Bamessing or Nsei (15,520). The least populated is Bali Gangsin (458), a Mubako-speaking hamlet deriving from nineteenth century raiders and refugees from Adamawa; the Bali Chamba and their allies and captures. The other chiefdoms of Tikar ethnic origin not yet mentioned here are Bamunka, Babungo, Baba I (Papiakum), Babessi, Bangolan, Bamali, Bafanji and Bamunkumbit.

From the point of view of socio-structural; agro-climatic and resource endowment, the Ndop region consists of a series of low-lying alluvial lands, interspersed by numerous streams, which sharply fall from the surrounding hills. But due to land misuse (uncontrolled dry season bush fires to

¹¹⁸ There has been a remarkable increase in the population of the Ndop Plain from the 1976 general census figures which stood at a resident population of 98,597, of which 93,568 or 94.9% were in the rural areas; and with that need for more arable lands. Moreover, many households are cultivating larger plots than formerly. The increasing cattle herds too, it has engendered serious conflicts between farmers and grazers who are in search of appropriate and adequate lands for their businesses.

recuperate the fertility of the soil, overgrazing and over-cultivation), much of the national grassy landscapes have been transformed into shrubby savannah.

In the Tikar and Chamba state-like societies outlined above, the hereditary Chief still wields considerable political, symbolic, spiritual power, and is the incarnation of its ritual values in the local traditional structures. He also has access to and control over huge quantities of human and material resources. For instance, a legitimate traditional ruler does not only have rights to the usually extensive palace lands, but a common practice still allows him the option to marry a large number of non-sororal wives. These regulations have deep roots in the symbolism of every chiefdom. In addition, the Chief is recognized nominally as the trustee of all the lands in his chiefdom and the senior titleholder in a highly stratified local structure of control and power relations. At base these dignitaries represent (ed) their society's model of behaviour, material ritualized ("gift") exchanges and social stratification. Such a holistic view of the status and prestige of the Chief makes it plausible to argue that in the Ndop chiefdoms as in other chiefdoms of Cameroon today, "Religion, chieftainship and patriarchy can be interpreted as fundamental to systems of moral order domination and social control of men and women" (Mope Simo, 1995: 84).

Evidently, other sources of social differentiation are emerging and are being integrated and articulated with the local traditional social structures. For instance, apart from direct involvement in the rapidly monetized economy, the new generation of chiefs everywhere have a keen interest to pursue their education and/or to enjoy the comforts of modern life.

Impact of Socio-Economic Relations on Land Resources

Social and economic change and development are inevitable in any society. But the extent and quality of success largely depends on the individuals involved, the local policies adopted and the conditions (for example, peace and social order) of implementation. It is widely accepted today that the greatest improvement in the living conditions of the populations in the NWP took place during the 1980s and up to 1993, especially With the establishment of the North West Development Authority

(MIDENO) project in 1981¹¹⁹. Evidence suggests that this has been one of the most successful integrated rural development schemes in Cameroon (Mope Simo, 1992). Coincidentally, this has also been the period with the most significant perturbations in the natural environment.

Changing Socio-economic Environment

My observations in the Ndop Plain area, permit me to say that the most visible changes (improved infrastructure, schools, medical facilities, administrative services and more income generating activities) in the conditions of living of the inhabitants have taken place in Bamunka - the administrative and economic capital of Ngoketunjia Division. It is because of this village's, longer and more intensive contact with wider social and economic opportunities. Such as the setting up of the UNVDA rice parastatal¹²⁰. The latter is the most important agro-industrial project and it "has encouraged the development of a complex multi-ethnic and peri-urban sector where the Bamunka proper form only a bare majority" (Mope Simo, 1995: 84).

It is clear that no farmer in the, NWP produces only for self-provisioning and social distribution as was the case in the distant past. Rather, agricultural producers (men and women) deliberately engage in the commercialization of some of their crops in order to cope with their increasing, and changing household economic and social needs. Granted that the role of women in agriculture is important and an overwhelming majority of the farmers are

¹¹⁹ The activities of MIDENO were frozen in 1993 as part of Cameroon's Structural Adjustment Programme and the recent effort of State disengagement from development projects.

¹²⁰ The Upper NunValley Development Authority (UNVDA) was created in 1978. It is an irrigated rice project. Prior to the adoption in 1988 of Cameroon's first Structural Adjustment Programme, it was, technically and financially supported by the government. Notwithstanding the shortcomings of this development corporation which I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Mope' Simo, 1992), it has been instrumental. For example, it has hastened the emergence of a rural capitalist class structure that was already in the process of formation in a non-gendered and more complex way.

small-holders who lack cash, and have no access to modern knowledge and, technologies, the traditional land-use systems of slash-and-burn farming are still predominant. This entails the cultivation of the conventional export crop, coffee, in more permanent plantations in and around the compounds (homesteads). These activities are carried out on land provided by the head of his/her natal lineage to which all members have proprietorial rights. Generally, they rely mainly on the use of labour of wives and dependents as well as the contributions of members of specific rural networks or organizations.

In those areas of the NWP where arable land is still available, for example, in Boyo, Menchum and parts of Bui Divisions, relatively long periods of following still serve the purpose of soil fertility and rejuvenation. In Mezam and Ngoketunjia Divisions which have the highest population densities of over 100 inhabitants per Km², the fallow periods have been gradually shortened over recent years to between 1 and 2 years at the most. But in the Donga and Mantung Division and remote portions of the Bui highlands, notably the Kilum (Oku) Montane forest area, even though the number of persons per Km² is much lower, the climate is favourable to large ruminant production (for example; cattle, goats and sheep). This land use pattern has increased the competition for land between food/cash crops male and female cultivators and Fulani/non-Fulani cattle-raisers: Families have less land, fewer livestock and less money - all to the detriment of the family's capacity to cope with chronic land conflicts financially and socially.

There is ample historical information, confirmed by the personal experiences of different generations of informants, on how the difficulty in finding good grazing lands during the dry season still compels the Fulani (Mbororo) graziers to resort to the transhumance system (Kaberry, 1960; Njeuma and Awasum, 1989). This is because of the absence of an appropriate feed technology which provides fresh and healthy materials like the growing of, Guatemala grass. This cattle movement enables huge herds, which would otherwise perish, to migrate during the dry season when water and pasturage become scarce in the uplands to the fertile lands of the Ndop Plain¹²¹ where they graze until the beginning of the next rainy season (Mope Simo, 1992: 359-374).

¹²¹ It is particularly so in villages like Bangolan, Bambalang, Bamunka and Bafanji which are drained by the flood water of the Bamendjin Dam. This drainage pattern may account for

The presence of large herds of cattle in the agricultural plains often creates problems of rival claims of farmers and graziers because, inevitably, these cattle damage crops already under cultivation (UNO, 1950: 73). Overgrazing and trampling and the lack of objective laws and policies to control the movement of cattle, have resulted in the virtual loss of biodiversity in some places in the NWP today. For instance, this is so in villages like Bali-Kurnbat and Bamunkumbit in the Ndop Plain area.

Nowadays, besides the fact that stock-breeding is no longer the preserve of the Fulanis alone, little or nothing has really changed. Some thirty-five years ago, the British Anthropologist, Phyllis Kaberry, observed that:

“ ... measures introduced by the administration to cope with grazier problems have been regarded as mere” stop gaps which, have never tackled the fundamental requirement of compelling Fulani to manage and control their cattle as efficiently as they do in some parts of Northern Nigeria” (Kaberry, 1960:22).

This situation still applies to this part of Cameroon. No attempt has been made to improve the farming and grazing systems anywhere in the Bamenda highlands, even though such improvement would make land available to potential users. In view of the current situation in Cameroon characterized by economic reforms, including the liberalization of the prices of various commodities, the ever-expanding production of food crops and cattle for meat and dairy products cannot continue without bitter range-wars and/or environmental damage, particularly deforestation and soil erosion. In turn, the rapid population growth mentioned much earlier in this work and the pressures on available lineage lands close to settlements and on lands which in the traditional tenure system belongs to a given chieftdom, have resulted in a shortening of the traditionally long fallow periods of 10-20 years even in remote areas. It should also be pointed out that in recent years shifting cultivation has been almost completely eliminated from some parts of the Province such as Ndu, Biame, Bamenda hill station, where people are now

the exceptional fertility of such lands. Perhaps recent population increases and shortage of cultivable agricultural lands everywhere explain the frequent land conflicts by neighbouring societies against Bamunka and Bafanji as Table 1 reveals.

farming the same patches of land without a break. This uninterrupted use of land, as we have already said, is due largely to human and animal population pressures, and in the case of Ndu, also to the establishment of the Ndu tea estate by the CDC agro-industrial complex.

There are indications of pressures to expand the cultivated areas, especially for widely consumed food crops like maize, taro and increasingly Irish potatoes and beans. Thus, the use of modern agricultural inputs is unlikely to be considered by the rural masses, primarily because of their low purchasing power and also because of the inherent inability of the low-activity clay soils, which predominate in most of the highlands of the NWP to respond to the high-technology farming systems which are possible, for example, in the lowlands of the southern dense humid forest regions of Cameroon. Without research and real change in agricultural policy, including the adoption of more rational land-use planning strategies, extensification is likely to be even greater in the years ahead. And the cost in terms of deforestation, inter-village tensions and farmer-grazier frictions, are bound to be substantial and will be borne by individuals and rural communities not only in the Ndop Plain area, but also in other regions of the Province.

From my observations and interviews in Bamunka, it may be concluded that one of the reasons for the land disputes in this village today is the indifference of the governing administrative officials, to the effects of the change that has occurred in the land/population ratio. For example, the population of Bamunka could be estimated at over 11,000 in 1990. Definitely with the emerging alterations in the traditional land tenure system here, as well as in other parts of the NWP, food crop producers no longer, have ample use of and occupancy rights to tracts of land from their patrikin and matrikin. On the contrary, officially, cattle grazers are allowed to do transhumance in the fertile valleys and in harvested rice fields during the dry season when good pasture becomes scarce. But it is the small-holder producers, most of whom are women (customarily they do not control land in their own right) who are bearing the brunt of the numerous land, conflicts observed. For example, many female informants complained that when a case is already in court, an injunction is imposed on the disputed portions of land, even when food crops had been planted on them. This action is not legally the case throughout the country. Before we continue with this discussion, a brief note on some of the uncertainties identified in Cameroon's

current land legislation and its effects on the different types of land disputes that will be analyzed is in order.

Ambiguities in the Modern Land Legislation: Insecurity of Tenure For Peasants

In Cameroon like in many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the original ideology and philosophy about land was that it had a ritual, religious and use-value. A common assumption in the Cameroon Grassfields has been that customary title to 'native' or traditional land is established and can only be proved and enjoyed by effective occupation of such lands - that is to say, by a person being in continued use and occupation of such tracts of land. Nevertheless, to judge from my visits to the Ndop Plain village chiefdoms, Oku and Kom, there were fairly well-defined lineage tracts marked by natural features, planted bushes, and stones which were perambulated, and protected by ancestral altars and magic objects intended to warn and bring affliction on encroachers. Such lands include palm bush, patches of woodland and sometimes even hunting bush. All were utilized for some purpose - the fallow, for example, providing fresh pasture. The informal commodization of land and the exaction of a sort of 'key-money' by 'customary land owners' in the political circumstances of the new unitary state - the United Republic of Cameroon - encouraged the government to enact land legislation in 1974. The Cameroonian land reform package is commonly referred to as the Land Tenure and State Land Ordinances. They were designed to create a common policy on land matters given the disparate systems of European codes and the numerous traditional land tenure precepts that hitherto had been operational in the predominantly French and English-speaking provinces of the country.

The fact is that under the new law, neither the land certificate/freehold arrangements of the former East Cameroon nor the leasehold system applied in the former West Cameroon were abolished. Instead, both patterns have been implemented side by side in the French and English-speaking regions of the country. Consequently, potential developers and investors have the option of choosing one system or another, depending on their individual abilities and preferences. The policy-makers envisioned a, political program which encourages freehold tenure by demarcation through survey and the

application of the land certificate system of legal permanent ownership or individual title deeds (Mope Simo, 1992: 264).

In the Ndop Plain chiefdoms, as in the wider region of the Western Grassfields today, even though the enactment of the new land laws were supposed to transform a Fon's titular control over village lands to one of symbolic powers, the majority of their subjects still respect them and would not challenge their claims. The result is that the Chiefs can easily negotiate with occasional recalcitrant sub-chiefs and lineage heads or manipulate the decisions of the national bureaucracy on such matters without provoking a political crisis.

The crux of the matter is that Cameroon's modern land tenure system is expensive. Where there is evidence of the existence of this land reform act, it is not understood by the vast majority of peasants, and above all it is unsustainable. Among other reasons, it is because the law pays slight or no attention to the different customary land control, use and management procedures. One of the expectations of the Cameroonian land laws was that like in other developing countries, the introduction of individual property rights independent of scale would facilitate the establishment of markets in land, as well as the stimulation of modern agriculture and economic development with more productivity (Berry, 1988: 56). By receiving a purely economic form, this productive resource will discard all its former political and social embellishments and relationships; in brief, all its traditional accessories.¹²²

The legislation on land resources does not take into consideration improved agro-forestry systems that will maintain soil fertility at a certain standard so that crop and animal production systems are sustainable. The over-exploitation of land resources by social actors with different interests, along with the need to increase plant and animal production for a rapidly growing population, places small-holders in a difficult situation which threatens the sustain ability of the local natural resources. More than ever

¹²² Legalistically speaking, the intent of the 1974 land ordinances was that the landowner can do with the land what in a free market situation; every owner of a commodity does or is expected of potential buyers. It is clear that this legal view of the private ownership of land has not resulted in the dissolution of the organic order of any of the rural communities.

before, the emerging situation has been the source of individualized, intra and inter family land disputes. These conflicts render the belligerents much poorer than they had been before the events took place.

At the present time, most of the cultivators in the NWP are seeking the clearing of marginalized lands and/or encroachment upon what is referred to in the 1974 land ordinances and the 1981 amended land laws as “State Property”. The other two legal categories of land are private property and national lands. The fact that State lands are allocated over areas where traditional land tenure arrangements are respected and that all land is basically controlled by the government, does not permit a rational and sustainable land use policy to be implemented. The ambiguities observed in Cameroon’s land reform act and, its importance in understanding, the issue of inter-village land disputes, form the basis of the examples presented in the next section.

The increasing commoditization of land could lead to a situation of insecurity of tenure for small-holders, the bulk of whom are female cultivators. Despite the intervention-regulatory appearances of the land legislation, my observation of its implementation in the Ndop plain chiefdoms today reveals the existence of a ‘dual dimension’ system. This dualism is evidenced by the fact that with the exception of chiefdom ‘palace grounds’¹²³, the State can expropriate any parcel of land. However, the option of the Chief in the village concerned, remains crucial in determining how much of the policies adopted are implemented and where necessary in the distribution of the compensations stipulated by the same law.

What this implies is that any legitimate Chief remains the caretaker and principal distributor of all lands in his chiefdom. Given this powerful position, he has ample opportunities to manipulate both the traditional and modern land - tenure arrangements. Generally, the traditional rulers are

¹²³ By the term ‘palace grounds’ I mean the vast portion of land reserved for the construction of the palace and other buildings for social and cultural purposes in every chiefdom in the Cameroon Grassfields. For example, in Bamunka this land also includes places designated by the regulatory society (*nggwase*) for community prayers, sacrifices and ceremonials or the popular annual festivals. It also covers land for royal game, raffia groves and a reafforested area behind the living quarters of the usually numerous royal wives.

merely ‘trustee occupiers’ of palace lands; ‘However; “it ‘is clear that they are parcelling out portions of such lands under their control to their children friends and favourites; and for the knowledgeable, and wealthy ones, some of this is being individually certificated. This situation leads to frequent land conflicts” (Mope Simo,1992: 276).

The Concentration of Inter-Chiefdom Land Conflicts in the Ndop Plain

One of the topical and complicated problems of ‘politics and economics which take up the best part of the leisure time, even of ordinary men and women throughout the Ndop Plain, is that there are many land disputes at all Levels. The findings of my research in the area reveal that members of the same family Lineage, quarter and more spectacularly, ‘the leaders of the majority of villages’ are going either to the customary or modern (magistrate’s) courts to settle what one informant once described as “petty disagreements”.

One of the effects of the gravity and costly ramifications of inter-chiefdom land conflicts and the rivalry for supremacy among rulers - who are generally acknowledged by members of the different villages as equivalent, is that the Ndop Fons conference¹²⁴ exists today only in name. In 1989, the president of the, Ndop Development and Cultural Association (NDECA)¹²⁵ summarized his views about the problem raised above in these words:

¹²⁴ The Ndop Fons Conference as the name suggests is a forum aimed at solidarity and unity. It was initiated by the Fons in this area themselves. Those of them I talked to pointed out that this informal association has served as a means of expressing and/or providing explanations to common problems of change and development such as farmer-grazer and inter-chiefdom land disputes to the provincial and central administrations.

¹²⁵ NDECA is an ethnodevelopment group or elite formulation comprising mainly self-appointed ‘big-men’--but to a less extent ‘big women’--from the thirteen chiefdoms in the Ndop area. As one of my informants remarked “the main objective of the organization is to unite the culturally diverse entities in order to-build a strong and dynamic administrative unit” (M, Muenyi, pers. comm.). Its members constitute an elite in the active political, social and economic sense. Those of them who are administrators and civil servants can be classified in the higher levels of the public and private sectors in the country. Some of these men and women also have direct access to the means of production (land credits and

“Another canker-worm that is eating deep into the fabrics of our society and retarding very much our development in this old subdivision is the rampant inter-village boundary disputes and quarrelling of individuals over parcels of land. I know that while population increases, land generally does not, but that does not mean that we should waste our energy and our meagre resources - to fight over tracts of uncultivated and undeveloped land. As elite, we should acquaint ourselves with the land law in force and take the challenges to brief (i.e. to inform and educate) our local population on government policy as far as land acquisition is concerned. But it is unfortunate to see that some of us are promoters of these divisive tendencies in our villages” (Yakum Ntaw, 1989: 2).

The above quotation reveals two major trends. First, the confusion and uncertainty under the modern land law have precipitated conflicts and litigation over land boundaries to become a significant feature of life in the Ndop area. Second, that individualized and inter-chiefdom land disputes have wrecked any attempt to cultivate a spirit of cooperation and unity toward ordered change in the locality. This point will be illustrated with four examples.

Case1: Bafanji versus Bamunkumbit Conflict

In terms of the sizes of their land, Bafanji is bigger than Bamunkumbit. It also has a larger population. For example, the 1987 census shows that there were 7,484 people in Bafanji and 4,314 inhabitants in Bamunkumbit. Bafanji produces a much wider variety of food crops than Bamunkumbit. This is probably due to the fact that much of the land in the former chiefdom is low-lying and made of alluvial soils while the latter has a mainly hilly terrain which is difficult to cultivate. The land dispute is alleged to have been caused by the Fon of Bamunkumbit authorizing his subjects to trespass into Bafanji

inputs), distribution and exchange on the one hand, and the national bureaucracy, on the other.

territory. The fighting between some members of the two chiefdoms that was provoked by the incursion, resulted in the destruction of food crops by the belligerents on both sides.

It was clear from the reports and petitions I read that very often the disagreement over a vital patch of land can be so serious that some opinion leaders, elite, notables, community leaders from the contesting villages who are living and working away from home, write to their Chief to appeal for calm and understanding in settling the differences. For example, in the case under review, the elite from Bafanji resident in Fako Division wrote to their leader and expressed their concern in these terms: “Our research into history proves that the two villages have never had any land dispute before now and have always had a very peaceful co-existence” (quoted from land files in the NRC office). In 1989, similar feelings of disapproval and doubt about the future were expressed by another key informant, Mr P .P. Nkweti a native of Bafanji, and former parliamentarian and tutor in Government High School Ndop, who commented that: “The explosive situation caused by inter-chiefdom land disputes in this locality have come to a head and cannot be left unchecked” (pers. comm.). Over the years, more and more of such conflicts have taken place there and across the wider region with even greater casualties and the destruction of properties.

At the time of the field research in 1989, the Divisional Officer or chief administrator in Ndop told me that the Bafanji-Bamunkumbit conflict had been resolved. This was after a joint meeting between the administrative authorities in the area and the villages concerned. Unfortunately, the Bamunkumbit leadership vehemently challenged the same decision of the local commission which it had previously endorsed.

The implication for the land reform act is that many people still consider their traditional land tenure system as the guiding principles for settling inter-chiefdom land disputes. Meanwhile the colonial boundaries have been repeatedly called to question.

Case 2: Bamunkumbit versus Bali Gashu Violence

In terms of land area and the size of the population, Bali Gashu is much smaller than Bamunkumbit. In 1987 the former chiefdom had a population of 1,718 inhabitants. Evidence from my earlier investigations in the Ndop Plain, suggests that in terms of infrastructure, social and economic

development, these two villages are among the poorest communities in Ndop.

From the reports I consulted in the NRC office, it was clear that much corruption and manipulation of previous decisions had been going on by the provincial modern bureaucracy in Bamenda. This attitude made it difficult for any measures to be taken against the aggressor by the Divisional office in Ndop. Timely intervention by the Divisional Officer prevented the outbreak of fresh hostilities between Bali Gashu and Bamunkumbit. This particular land dispute had been going on since the late 1950s. For instance, in an interview with Mr V.T. Lainjo, a former administrator in the Ndop area up to the late 1950s, he remarked: "I can still recall my grim experience of a fatal incident which took place on the eve of Christmas day 1958, when I was forced to spend the better part of that night in trying to calm down angry villagers from Bamunkumbit and Bali Gashu, following a free for all fight over land. Like many cases before then this kept me worried about the prospects of achieving peace and unity in this region" (pers. comm.).

In 1988 the long standing conflict between the two chiefdoms was resolved. In announcing the news to the press, the Divisional Officer for Ndop at the time made a pertinent remark about "... the rampant land cases reported in the sub-division is deplorable ... he frowned at the double dealing attitudes of most Chiefs in the area who sell one piece of land to many people. He appealed to the Chiefs to show the light as leaders and as auxiliaries of the administration by settling their petty disputes and other problems in their villages amicably"¹²⁶ (Cameroon Tribune, 1988; 6).

However, it is only in 1989 that peace and dialogue was finally re-established between the disputants. This was at the prize of Bamunkumbit accepting to pay compensation to Bali Gashu for the destruction caused to its food crops and other properties which was put at the colossal Sum of 14,234,210 CFA. There is no evidence that Bali Gashu received the money. This is one case among many, but it is representative of the waste to village people's usually meagre incomes, as a result of land-related litigation. .

¹²⁶ I was told that prior to the creation of a modern court in the Ndop area in the mid 1980s, many of the inter-chiefdom, inter and intra-lineage land conflicts in this region were settled in the customary courts and/or within the villages where such incidents had occurred.

Case 3: Bamunka and its Neighbours Disputes

At the time of my research in January 1990, it was reported that all neighbouring Chieftdoms to Bamunka (Bamessing, Bamali and Babungo) were directly or indirectly nursing grievances against each other. This behaviour is hardly surprising for three reasons. First, the advantageous commercial location of Bamunka makes its Neighbours envious. Second, as in Bamunka, population pressure is increasing, especially in Bamessing and Babungo which lie to the south and north of Bamunka respectively, and all these villages are traversed by the national road which runs from the cosmopolitan city of Bamenda. Thus, there are already signs of the scarcity of arable and grazing land in the vicinity of the older residences in Bamunka. It was already possible to observe changes in the farming systems from shifting cultivation with long periods of fallow, to that of intensive farming with a much shorter time allowed for the soil to recuperate its fertility. Thirdly, the situation has been exacerbated by the post-colonial government's establishment of private property rights to land through market relations. One of the consequences of this policy is the increasing tendency toward competition and 'speculation' among the rich for this scarce means of production.

A review of the land files at the NRC office in Ndop and interviews with some men and women in the area suggests that there is an explosion of land disputes in and around Bamunka today. This point is illustrated by Table 1.

Table 1: Some Examples of Inter-Chiefdom Land Disputes in the Ndop Plain, 1968-1989

Chiefdoms	Conflict with Other Chiefdoms	Conflicts with Bamunka Involved in		No. of Cases	%
1. Bamali	2	3	ii	7.7	
2. Bamessing	1	3	ii	7.7	
3. Bamunka	1,2,10, 11	-	iv	15.4	
4. Bali-Kumbat	5,7,9,12	-	iv	15.4	
5. Bali Gangsin	-	-	-	-	
6. Bali Gashu	4,9	-	ii	7.7	
7. Bafanji	4,9	-	ii	7.7	
8. Babessi	11	-	i	3.8	
9. Bamunkumbit	4,5,6	-	iii	11.5	
10. Babungo	11	3	ii	7.7	
11. Baba I	8,10	3	iii	11.5	
12. Bambalang	4	-	i	3.8	
13. Bangolan	-	-	-	-	
Total	22	4	26	99.9	

n = 26 (100%)

Source: Constructed from the NRC Land Disputes Register, 1990

Table 1 shows that Bamunkumbit has been involved in many land conflicts and, as was said much earlier, it even went to war with one of the villages in the Ndop area (i.e., Bali Gashu in 1958). Informants alleged that this was because of the interest in expanding its borders. The same table shows that only Bali Gangsin and Bangolan had never been engaged in inter-chiefdom conflicts over land.

It is useful to point out that some of the inter-chiefdom conflicts shown on Table 1 had been repeated over the years. This is particularly so with those between the centre village in the Ndop area, Bamunka, and its Neighbours. From the explanations given in the two preceding paragraphs, Table 1 indicates that Bamunka has been involved in four or 15.4% of the 26 conflicts reported during the period reviewed. The administration has not provided a happy solution for the thorny problem between Bamunka and its Neighbours.

The situation described above is also true of Bali-Kumbat, but for a different reason. The involvement of Bali-Kumbat in numerous land disputes with bordering chiefdoms is less related to the strategic importance of its geographic allocation than to a great ambition for territorial aggrandisement.

Rather, as we shall see in the next case material, it is because of this chiefdom's burning desire to play a hegemonic role in the politics of the region even today.

Case 4: Bali-Kumbat versus Bafanji Wars: 1965-1995

There is evidence that the much publicized bloody feud over land between Bali-Kumbat and Bafanji which broke out in early June 1995 was not the first case in the history of both chiefdoms, but the most violent since the 1960s (see Table 1 above). It will be recalled that conflict between the two villages overland began in 1965 and petitions had been made of ownership over an area called Mbangang. In 1969 a land consultation committee was set up by the government of the former West Cameroon, which demarcated the area in favour of Bafanji, and pillars were planted. But Bali-Kumbat, under the reign of one of their most influential Chiefs, Galabe II: challenged; the decision and sued the Bafanjis to the Buea Federal Court of Justice. Then, like in 1971, the judiciary ruled in favour of Bafanji. The Bali-Kumbat declared that "we have been deprived of our land because Hon. Muna, who is Prime Minister influenced the courts because of a grudge that we supported the Bali Nyongas in 1952 against the Widekums" (Kum Set Ewi, 1995a: 3)¹²⁷. In 1994 both villages were at war again and all the pillars demarcating the boundary were pulled down.

The importance of the most recent upheaval, is not only in the fact that the BaliKumbat attack on Bafanji "led to several casualties and destruction of property estimated at 5 million F.CFA" (Kum Set Ewi, 1995c: 2). It is also because the tension, hostility and overt antagonism between the Bali-Kumbat and the Bafanjis was the 'most bloody, involving, perhaps for the first time, the use of very intensive and sophisticated weapons. Moreover, it generated

¹²⁷ This land dispute resulted in an attack by the Widekums on the Balis on 3 March 1952. Two thousand acres of land were turned over by the Balis to 150 families of the Mengen-Mbo section of the Widekum tribe which earlier were unsettled and had no land of their own, and a further 1,000 acres were surrendered to forty families of the Mengen-Muwa section (UNO, 1952: 72) With the expanding human and animal populations, it is unimaginable that such a concession can be made anywhere in the NWP today.

so much fears of renewed fighting following the circulation of tracts in the latter village on Thursday June 15, purported to emanate from Bali-Kumbat, which threatened to resume the war.

For nearly three days (June 2-4 1995), the second clash in one year erupted between the Bali-Kumbat and Bafanji over a disputed piece of land on their common border. The villages fought each other using automatic rifles, grenades and tear gas, cutlasses, clubs, spears and poisoned arrows. There are conflicting reports as to who attacked first. The Bafanji claimed that the Bali-Kumbat shot three of their kinsmen while the Bali-Kumbat argued that the trouble started when their adversary seized and killed an eighteen year-old Bali-Kumbat boy and cut off his genitals at the disputed site (Kum Set Ewi, 1995a: 3).

According to official reports, 18 people had lost their lives with as many as 14 from Bafanji. Apart from the unprecedented displacement of human beings, huge amounts of property were looted and burnt including houses, the Bafanji Health Centre, the Cooperative Society Building, the Government Primary School and a Coffee Factory which belonged to one Ali Nekenbeng.

Furthermore, on June 4 following the cruel onslaught when Puncho Oscar, a Bafanji farmer was burnt to death, it is estimated that 5,000 Bafanji people fled the village to different directions. For example, some 3,000 peasants, most of them women, flocked to Baham and Ngalim in the West Province as refugees. Among the displaced persons were 200 school pupils, many of whom have since been reported missing.

The traditional ruler of Bafanji, Fan Andrew Ngwefuni III, described their grief and shock in an interview with the bi-weekly newspaper, *The Herald*, saying "The BaliKumbat have destroyed the wealth of our village accumulated, for over one hundred years". It can be said that the Bali-Kumbat have brought the Bafanji crashing down to a state of ruin, annihilated it and dragged its inhabitants towards utter loss. This has been speedily accomplished by the disintegration of their family and community bonds, by injuring their prestige and transgressing against their lofty goals of peace and prosperity. More than ever before, the most recent violence has sowed a seed of hatred between the two chiefdoms.

Above all, this persistent and wild scramble for land came as a surprise to the other inhabitants of Bali-Kumbat Sub-Division (i.e. from Bamunkumbit, Bali-Gashu, BaliGangsin and Bafanji). This is because on Thursday May 7,

the Governor of the North West Province had held a meeting in Bali-Kumbat with all the eight traditional rulers in a bid to reconcile the warring factions in this administrative unit. The fact is that troops made up of gendarmes and policemen swooped on BaliKumbat on June 22 and searched houses in an unusual move to seize arms (Kum Set Ewi, 1995b: 1). This event was indicative that the administration in the NWP which had been criticized by the Chairman of Cameroon's Human Rights Committee for not acting promptly when the disturbances were reported, had recognized that Ball-Kumbat villagers, with the instigation of their Fon, Doh Gah Gwanyin III, were the aggressors.

There is clear evidence from this latest Bali Kumbat versus Bafanji war over land, which confirms information from my earlier research in the Ndop area, that it is not the ordinary folk who are going to the courts with complaints about land. Rather, as one informant rightly put it, "The quarrels are among the 'big fish' who usually compete for power, wealth and prestige" (Nchio Minkee, pers. comm.). In other words, most of the tensions, insecurity and cultural disintegration arising from conflicts over tracts of land, can be said to be sparked off by men in the higher reaches of the traditional and modern bureaucracies and not the poor peasants. Paradoxically, it is the latter who pay the greatest price for such contemptible acts.

Perhaps when one takes into consideration the undeclared issues behind the most recent war between the two villages, then the adage that "there's no smoke without fire", is acceptable. It will be recalled that a few months before the incident, there was a report in one of the ruling CPDM party newspapers that the Fon of Bafanji had become a staunch militant and potential local boss. Consequently, the rivalry for prominence and the reluctance of the Fon of Bali-Kumbat to forfeit this source of patronage, could be one of the root causes of the invasion of Bafanji.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ In these days of polarized politics when political motives are easily read into every event, I do not think that the idea of resorting to the courts as a means of finding lasting solutions to the frequent land cases taking place in the NWP today is sound judgment.

Fon Doh Gah Gwanyin ILI of Bali-Kumbat is currently facing a court trial for his role in the land war and invasion just described (Kum Set Ewi, 1995d: 3). *The Herald* states baldly that:

“The Fon of Bali Kumbat is viewed in the North West as not unconnected to the organized destruction of Bafanji village. Moreover, North Westerners have still not forgiven the Fon, over widely held allegations that he shot and killed a subject of his who raised alarm when he observed that his Fon was apparently involved in some malpractice during the March 1992 legislative elections. These allegations may indeed be untrue yet public perception of the Fon remains one of stigma, which is why sensible politics should have steered clear of him” (The Herald No. 231, 1995: 4)

This is not the first time he is being dragged to court to stand trial over land matters (Mope Simo, 1992: 285). In this social circumstance like others that exist or might still occur, judgment should be made “without fear or favour”. What this means is that the law-courts are not swayed by fear of the consequences of their judgment; nor are they swayed by favour: a predisposition to look upon one litigant as more important than the other. A good human judge is above politics, above ethnic loyalties, above favours and bribes, and above fear of his superiors, of violence or threats: if this is not the case, then the “NW Tribal Wars”, hatred and disintegration could simply continue. Land disputes have assumed serious proportions and are being over politicized in the NWP. But the administration is not taking impartial steps to deal with them yet. The ancient feud between the Bali-Kumbat and Bafanjis does not appear to be amicably and satisfactorily settled.

The fact is that while land is stagnant or does not increase, the human and livestock populations are growing in the Ndop area as elsewhere in the NWP. There was agreement among my male informants, that the rising number of armed conflicts between neighbouring chiefdoms is a direct consequence of the cash income and material benefits which personalities, like the Chiefs, derive from any piece of land sold and/or allotted to the ‘big men’ who are building their retirement homes even in remote villages today.

Conclusion

Many explanations have been given in this study for the increasing tensions and conflicts overland that can be observed in the NWP today. For example, the ambitions and interests in territorial aggrandisement by some politicians and traditional rulers aside, the recent inter-chiefdom feuds have been directly or indirectly sponsored by political bosses who really understand the considerable influence which local indigenous Fons still enjoy in their societies.

Are traditional rulers not supposed to be the mirror of good morals in society, instead of being replete with blackmail, intrigues and scandals of all sorts? Although man is by nature a political animal, I think that Government must accept the necessity for a sound long-term (land) natural resource policy, and the obligation to ensure that its land use and management policy is implemented. Such a policy should aim at maintaining the neutrality of Chiefs in partisan politics. This will be a crucial action for guaranteeing local and regional peace and integration.

In terms of other solutions to the type of land disputes examined in the four cases presented, perhaps it will be useful to settle with the colonial boundaries once and for all. In addition, a buffer zone should be created in those tracts of land between any two chiefdoms where such an area is the bone of contention or the primary area of concentration of the hostilities. The natural resources and production from such places will be shared by the villages concerned. It is also important that they adopt more sustainable systems of production and management of their scarce land resources. Such decisions should be implemented by the government with ethics, objectivity and transparency. For example, the point has been expressed more succinctly that: "In providing such an answer North West Fons will discover the way back to restoring their traditional authority which has been eroded in recent years because of ill-considered dabbling in partisan politics" (The Herald, No.216, 1995: 4).

Therefore, it is only with the introduction of more efficient and sustainable farming and grazing systems that the problem can be controlled. There is one promising way of mitigating problems brought about by the long-standing issue of farmer-grazier conflicts, and in recent times the rampant land confrontations over land which have gained notoriety in the Ndop Plain chiefdoms, and by extension the NWP. This requires the design

and implementation of a national land use and management plan, which takes into consideration the regional peculiarities and the democratic participation of all social classes, irrespective of gender differences.

A substantial proportion of the natives and/or permanent settlers in the NWP, still live and work in the rural areas. To give them, especially the poor and vulnerable groups, the right and opportunity to live according to their traditions; thereby protecting their lands from present and future invaders, is a much sounder policy for long-term social justice and equitable development. The empowerment of people at the community levels, should be part of a more rational and meaningful land use and management option for environmentally sustainable development and livelihood security. This consciousness should enable different categories of social actors in the NWP and Cameroon as a whole, to emerge from their ethnic cultures to a national culture which requires greater tolerance and peaceful coexistence, in an atmosphere of unity in diversity. It is in this light that President Paul Biya rightly argues that: "... moving from ethnic groups to the Fatherland implies the stage of nation. This is because while a nation is a human community vitally conscious of its unity and solidarity, that transcends ethnic, religious or linguistic barriers, a Fatherland is a concept that mobilizes various groups" (Biya, 1986: 102).

All in all, if the sort of land disputes analyzed in this paper which act as triggers for violent conflict were to persist, they could eventually acquire strong political, social and economic overtones in the West Province of Cameroon too. Such a situation would jeopardize the prospects of peace, cultural integration - this is the first step and chief cornerstone of national integration - and the common weal for the majority of poorest of the poor. Reason and creativity, not force, must prevail as the genuine solution to the "NW Tribal Wars" in particular and Cameroon's problems in general. For peace must be and peace should be, or else life and development cannot be possible.

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Regional Balance and National Integration: A Historical Overview Of Mafa Integration In National Politics: An Imbalance Along Religious Lines

Jose C.M. Van Santen

Introduction

It is the 20th of May and still quite early in the morning. I'm half awake and hear the noise of my son's friend making breakfast in the kitchen. He and another friend stayed over for the night as they often do. I hear the others slowly getting up. Then they wake me up, the friend telling me: 'Here is your breakfast Mama; your tea we left on the table'. And then to my son: 'hurry up, we need to get dressed'. They get into their school suit to participate in the march pass, which will be held in honour of the national celebration. My son looks like one of Mokolo's 'locals' and as a 'real' mother I am proud and feel touched. I wave them good-bye as they leave, adding worriedly 'Did you take some water along? and please keep your hat on', as he has been recently ill and I don't want the sun to hit him all day.

I leave afterwards with a friend and some neighbouring children. There is this special atmosphere in town as many people are on their way to participate in the celebration: Women baking cakes and 'beignets' so that their children can sell them and they can make some extra money; Islamic men well dressed, who do the shopping early so their wives can cook a nice dinner this day, and still have enough time left to watch the march pass; many more children in their costumes and suits. The march pass will be held on the local sports ground. Already the tribune is full with people. There are the *lamido*, local chiefs, from the whole region, impressively dressed in beautiful garments with rich 'broderie' and headbands; the local elite in their Islamic garments; the 'strangers' from the south in western suits - who have been transferred to Far North and are always complaining about the heat, the lack of proper food and the backwardness of the local population; the *nasaara'en*, 'whites': priests, nuns, vicars from the different missions, and the westerners working for the local 'aid agencies'. They are all there and have

left a place for me on the grand stand - because I am white. They thereafter want to chase my friend and the children. I announce that in that case I will leave as well and thereupon they are allowed to stay. Everybody waits for the senior divisional office (SDO) - also a 'southerner' who will arrive in his chauffeur driven car notoriously late, the Divisional officer - a Fulbe from the North, and the mayor - a Christian Mafa, and many more people who are important enough to stand in the *'prefets'* shadow. After their arrival, the national anthem is sung and the flag is hoisted. When the 'big shots' are seated the march pass starts. All the school children from the five primary schools in town and the schools in the rural area march pass. Many, many, many children. I have but eyes for my own child - the 'real' mother again, and it is not hard to recognize him in the crowd. Not only is he the only white blond guy, but also the only one wearing shoes. As not all the children can afford them, the headmaster ordered all of them to take them off, the only exception - so I learned afterwards, being my son.

Some schools have been chosen to prepare performances: dances with songs. A Mafa school in the near surroundings of Mokolo imitate the wars they used to have in former periods with 'newly homemade' spears and weapons, with a wink at the audience: Those were the days, when we were still 'primitive', had no schools, and were no part of the overall national government of Cameroon. Another class of Mafa children sing a song in which they express the fact that they are Mafa, and have their own ways of doing things. Brave self-irony is expressed when they take as an example the special way they wave at strangers passing by, arms above their heads, which the whole audience recognizes with big laughter. But the message in their song leaves no, doubt: we were all Mafa, but fortunately we now are all Cameroonians. The primary schools are followed by the secondary schools. Especially, the endless boring line of blue and white dressed pupils of the *'lycee'*, singing: The *lycee* is passing - a superfluous text, gives hope concerning the scolarisation of this 'backward' northern area. In the first grade the number of women equals that of men; the higher the classes get the less female students we find. The march pass the cultural associations, the women from the *'maisons des femmes'*, the workers from the companies based in the area (refusing to take part in the march pass a report at the local police station), the women from the only political party, CPDM - dressed in blue cloth with the party initials and the portrait of the president, expressing their loyalty to the party as well as the men representing the party, who wear the

same cloth in brown. Finally we get to the most exciting part for (neo-colonial) whites; the local *lamibe* from the region on horseback, surrounded by their *maccube*, servants (litt. slaves) also on horseback in colourful clothes. The horses are beautifully dressed too and the men spur on their horses to go at full gallop and brandish their weapons threateningly at the audience. They are accompanied by the '*chefs de quartier*' on foot and many other people from regions that are headed by particular *lamibe*. They are dancing, waving and shouting. It lasts quite a while, as there are quite some *lamibe* in the region and they all look impressive, very impressive. As I head home, slowly because of the crowd, I have a clear theoretical concept in my head: 'What an ideal-typical demonstration of 'nation-building' I have witnessed.

The impression I just have given dates back to 1987. The concept of nation-building was self-evident in those days of national pride, and at first sight it looked like a balanced situation in which people from various ethnic background and different religions lived peacefully in the same town celebrating the national festivities. I would be the last to argue that the contrary was the case, yet if we deny the fact that for the Far North the much admired regional balance during the Ahidjo-period (1960-1982) has been farce, due to the socio-political inequalities that have developed in the Far North since Fulbe supremacy in the early 19th century - an inequalities that persisted during the colonial period, we also deny the suppression many non-Islamic people went through. Recent nationalist movements and outbursts of ethnic violence in Europe and elsewhere have taught us that a denial, and in many cases even suppression of differences between different peoples, thereby forcing the course of history, far more easily leads to new chaotic situations than acceptance and joint efforts to avoid a resurgence of past repression. For the Mafa the cruel invasion of the Islamic politically dominant Fulbe is still quite fresh in people's minds. Some people can narrate their own experiences (see van Santen 1993: 58, 75, 79) but stories about the first cruel Fulbe *lamido* also became legends, that could easily be used for obscure purposes. Instead of taking Fulbe supremacy in the region as a matter of fact that could not be avoided, I want to pay attention in this paper to the cultural context of the historical developments which led to political and other inequalities between the Mafa and the Fulbe, in order to better understand the present situation in the new political constellation. Until recently, these inequalities led to the fact that - to Use Schilder's words (see Schilder's contribution to this volume) non-Fulbe politicians were subtly

pushed to conform to Fulbe political culture, which was coloured by Islamic symbolisms and by Fulfulde as the main spoken language. I will describe the dissimilar socio-political backgrounds of the two peoples involved; how did a hierarchical situation develop in which the Fulbe became the rulers, and the Mafa the overruled? Why did this situation continue during the colonial period and after independence? I will thereafter appraise the question if we can speak of a new balance in the post-Ahidjo period, when the dominance of the Islamic population in the North slowly diminished. .

Social and Political Contexts of Mafa and Fulbe Society

Until the end of last century the Mafa, as one of the ethnic groups that inhabited the North of Cameroon, refused to be dominated by the (Islamic) kingdoms around them, be they Mandara or Fulbe. There is a large gap between the Islamic centralized societies that had come into existence in preceding centuries, and Mafa society which can be described as a rural segmented society (also Martin 1970: 32). Though the Fulbe *lamidats* (provinces) and Mafa society have both been part of the Cameroonian state since independence, this gap still remains. The encounters between the two people at the beginning of this century were not too friendly. The following quotation serves as an example:

March 17, 1913: On Monday the 8th of Banjaru Awwal (by the Muslim calendar) I sent Mahawonga to hunt slaves for me amid the Pagans called Dugupahi and he found 11 slave girls and one cow.

April 8, 1913: On Tuesday the 30th of Banjaru Awwal, Ahmadu and Jaure Abba went off with my people to Mokolo and captured 23 and killed three.

March 15, 1916: On Wednesday the 10th of Banjaru Turbindu, I made a raid and captured cattle from Mokolo, and on Friday I captured cattle from Lawan and Dubur. The total number of cattle was 167.

Thus wrote Hamman Yadiji, then *lamido* (chief) of the *lamidat* (province) of Madagali, a town that lies just across the border in present-day Nigeria and which in those days, was part of the large Sokoto Empire, that extended from North Nigeria to North Cameroon. His diary leaves little doubt about the relation, which the Fulbe sustained with the Mafa. They used the mountains as a slave reservoir, and regularly took Mafa women and men into slavery (van Santen 1993; see also Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993: 266). We will hereafter first describe Mafa social and political organisation:

Mafa Social and Political Organisation

The Mafa are a caste-society, divided in the blacksmith and the non blacksmith castes, an essential division running through the whole social structure. Blacksmiths occupy a special place within society: the men work the iron and bury the dead, the women make the pottery and used to be, or still are midwives. On the one hand, they are considered inferior to non-blacksmith people. Yet at the same time they are indispensable, occupying a place at the Centre of society because of their irreplaceable tasks (Martin 1970: 78 ff; Boisseau et Soula 1974; Podlewski 1966; van Santen 1993: 228-244; 1995). The Mafa do not live in villages but are scattered around the countryside. Their social organization is very complex. The household, *gay*, is the fundamental social unit. They distinguish clans, and are strictly clan exogamous and caste endogamous. For members of the blacksmith caste, it is strictly forbidden to marry members from the non-blacksmith caste. Women always remain important for the patrilineage of their fathers and the bridewealth for the first-born girl is received by her paternal grandfather.

Although Martin was of the opinion that the only power women have in Mafa society is to change husbands and that they are only free to choose '*la sauce a laquelle elles seront: mangées, c'est le seul piment de leur existence*' (Martin 1970:173), I found that women act very independently and easily leave their husbands and their menfolk. Besides, in the past, many clan wars were started through misunderstandings or difficulties involving women. As a matter of fact women can be placed at the centre of interclan relations, solidarity factions, peace, unity and balance. Yet a woman remains dependent on the authority of the elders and men in general, as the society is organized around the 'survival' of the patriarch, the father of the house, *bab-gay* (see also Boisseau and Soula 1974: 159) Children always belong to their father's clan and they have important functions upon the death of the latter and during certain rituals (van Santen 1993:177 ff).

The Mafa have a very decentralized political structure. The father of the house, *bab-gay* has often been considered the highest political authority. As Martin remarked:

Chez les Foulbe, avec leur système centralisé, il suffisait de tuer un chef pour devenir maître de tout son territoire. Chez les 'Matakam'(Mafa) on peut tuer un chef sans pour autant réduire la

communauté politique qu'il faudrait Conquerors gay par gay, jusqu'au dernier. Il n'en resterait qu'un seul que le cran, le village et la société seraient toujours vivants et aptes à se perpétuer (Martin 1970:180).

Sons become head of households as soon as they are married except for the youngest, who will always have land to work. He remains in the house of the father but also remains dependent on him. The father will eventually move out. Mothers remain in the household of their last-born son. The first-born son, will have a say over the land his father owned after the death of the latter; he can either keep it to himself or divide it between the wives of his father and his brothers. Yet the rules are not very strict:

If a younger son is very clever he leaves for his father's brother or an elderly person, so that it will be him who inherits and has a say over the land.

In short we can say that clans of different status and power settled in different waves over the mountains. They succeeded in living together, then built up a common existence, and finally made themselves indispensable to each other. In their complementarity they became a community. However, until recently (or those who never left their area, clan membership is more important than ethnic identity. Only when one becomes part of a larger ethnic community surrounded by other ethnic groups, and conscious of the fact that one is also a member of the Cameroonian state, does 'Mafaness' become meaningful to the people.

Yet there are certainly people with, authority and power in the community. A region or a village consists of several groups with different kinship ties. Individuals from other regions may have joined them. Their life together is not organized by kinship. Instead, those people who, are recognized as authorities resolve the, conflicts that may arise on the level of the village, the clan or the lineage. This social order is kept independent from the, outside world. Intervention by the outside world in former days meant war. The society in which one lives is recognized by its inhabitants as the political unit, independent of one's descent. So if two regions started fighting each other, people from the same clan could also become opponents, while in other situations clans fought each other, as we mentioned before.

Political authority can depend on age, sex, birth, etc., but it is not a gerontocratic society. Age comes after genealogical proximity and after ritual and conciliatory power (Martin 1970: 171 ff.). Within every region there is one clan mostly comprising those who first settled and cleaned the land - that is the 'chief-Clan', *bi-gwalibay*. The other clans, who in most cases arrived later, came by intermediary of this clan. The elders of the chief clan have more power than the members of the other clans. They select by mutual agreement the chief of the region, *bi-ndam*. The task of the latter is to direct the agricultural cycle (when to start sowing and harvesting), the large communal festivities, like the harvest festivals and the feast of the bull, and to organize required sacrifices in the interest of the community. Beside this chief of the region there is also a rainmaker, a locust chief and a chief of the panthers. These specialists can exercise power in the community by their abilities to make rain, keep away the crickets, or chase the panthers. New in the political organisation is the *Ndosak*, the chief of a quarter, a new function in the post-independent political constellation. The Women's role in these political activities seems to be reduced to nothing, but they have their own strategies. Within the rituals and on a symbolic level, they need to be taken into account, otherwise society would be struck by chaos. Many clan wars started around conflicts about women, and they also remain important for their father and his patri clan and need to be present during rituals and sacrifices. Besides that as a wise contemplative Mafa man said:

Fathers very much like and appreciate their daughters even in former days. They can always count on them. If my wives are giving birth I always hope it will be a girl. It's the mother who prefers sons as they will go and live with them afterwards.

Though new developments such as Islamisation, Christianisation, scolarisation, urbanization, and overpopulation (which led to a growing scarcity of land) had its impact on Mafa society, this system still persists in the rural areas among those who remained faithful to their original religion, and also within newer Christian communities. Only the Islamised Mafa who nearly all have settled in town, have adopted the political constellation of the Fulbe.

Colonial reports consider societies like the Mafa to be anarchic, the reason why Fulbe *lamibe*, chiefs were propped up to rule these societies. The

impact of this colonial attitude has been far-reaching. In order to get an articulated view of the contradictions of the two people concerned, I will proceed to describe the Fulbe social and political system of organisation.

Fulbe Social and Political Organisation

Contrary to the Mafa, The Fulbe have a pastoral past. According to their tradition, they raised and herded cattle as their main occupation and strongly disliked agriculture (Azarya: 1976:9). Though many of them have become sedentary, have their fields and need to work their plots, they still maintain special ties with cattle. The pastoral Fulbe are organized in descent groups. Their marriage rules favour endogamy. But in order to maintain a superior economic, as well as political position, a combination of exogamous and endogamous rules were in practice. It allowed them to compete with social units or equivalent lineage segments (Dupire 1970; Dupire 1972 and Dupire 1981). These facts elucidate how they managed to incorporate members of other ethnic groups while holding on their own specific identity. This identity can be approached through analysis of the image they have of themselves and, further, through the stereotypes by which their Neighbours characterise them (Dupire 1981: 168). In their own view, the social distance between them and the local population was, apart from the language, stressed in terms of a special Fulbe way of life, called *pulaaku*. In North Cameroon, the nomadic Fulbe - called *M'bororo* by other ethnic groups, nowadays still move with their cattle to the fertile soil in search of pasture. They are very much marginalised in north Cameroonian society (van Santen in press; Moritz 1995).

The Fulbe had arrived in North Cameroon about two and a half centuries ago in search of pastures. By the end of the eighteenth, beginning of the nineteenth century they were well settled in the province of Adamawa. From the eighteenth century onwards the Fulbe were Islamised. For the Fulbe groups who settled in the Adamawa, Islam became a unifying element. In those days, the Fulbe still had to pay tribute to other ethnic groups for their grazing rights and their cattle was often stolen (Mouctar Bah 1993; note 2). The formation of a political hierarchical centre in Adamawa by the Fulbe was directly related to the victories of Uthman dan Fodio, who since 1804 replaced Hausa and Borneo leaders by new chiefs who submitted to him, and this expansion was the beginning of the Sokoto Empire. Inspired by him, the

Islamic Fulbe, who lived in the Bornou, region, also became partisans for Uthman dan Fodio when the latter gave the flag of the jihad to Modibbo Adama of Yola (Nigeria) to spread Islam in the Fombina and to establish Fulbe hegemony (Mouctar Bah 1993:62; Njeuma 1993: 90; van Santen 1993). In the words of Mouctar Bah:

Sous sa conduite ces pacifiques bergers se transformaient en impétueux guerriers, s'inspirant de la tactique, de la stratégie et de l'armement des Hausa et des Bornouan. Sous sa conduite et celle de ses successeurs et d'autres d'ardo'en, (local leaders), une sene de campagnes militaires permettaient le contrôle d'un vaste espace géographique qui, érige en émirat, fut appelée, Adamawa, avec pour capitale Yola dans la vallée Bénoué. Un lamidat qui a son tour acceptait la souveraineté de Sokoto (Mouctar Bah 1993: 69).

However, Azarya (1978) and van Raay (1971, and Moritz (1995) question whether the Fulbe clans who participated in the Jihads were motivated by religious conviction or by frustration with certain intolerable conditions. The sedentary ethnic groups made them suffer. As they said themselves: *'Min yari bone'*, (litt. *On boit le malheur*), which meant that the Fulbe had to pay excessive taxes in order to get access to fodder resources and taxes, and that their cattle was often stolen. So these intolerable conditions included interference with what the Fulbe considered good animal husbandry (van Raay 1971: 7). More serious was the fact that the Fulbe were sometimes obliged to abide by local customs that conflicted with the foreign customs.

Les chefs locaux exercée souvent le jus primae noctis sur les jeunes nils foulbe, ce qui heurta, au plus haut point, leur code moral (Pulaaku) (Mouctar Bah 1993: note 2).

Kirk Greene (1958) describes a case in which Fulbe took up arms against pagan rulers because of demands for Fulbe daughters by pagan rulers: Such a demand in about 1805 by the chief of Bandung was, according to legend, occasion for the first direct step towards the establishment of the Fulbe supremacy in Adamawa. Ardo Jobbi, head of the Wolarbe around Song, slew his daughter rather than yield her up, then turned and killed the chieftain lest

he demanded again what had been refused beyond recall. His deed was the signal for war (Kirk Greene 1958; in Moritz 1995:19).

Ardo'en, who were successful in warfare, were recognized by the Emir of Yola and the Sokoto empire, as legitimized leaders of different *lamidats*, (see also Schilder: 1994: 101). Slave raids and military operations caused new migration movements. Quite some societies withdrew to inaccessible areas to which the Fulbe cavalry had no access; like the Mandara Mountains. Others submitted to the Fulbe leaders, Islamised and intermarried with the Fulbe (see also Schilder 1994), and in due time regarded themselves as Fulbe a situation that Schultz describes for Guider and its surroundings (Schultz 1984). The aristocratic Fulbe also had an intentional policy to transfer population for economic exploitation. As real pastoralists, the Fulbe loathed agriculture. However, when they settled and became sedentary, they needed workers for the land they had conquered, hence the need for slaves (van Santen 1993; Azarya 1976; Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993). The Fulbe who had violently taken over political power, found themselves in a favourable economic situation before the arrival of the colonial powers. Thus the power of the Fulbe was clearly related to their Islamic identity and the private costs and benefits were optimal for the Fulbe aristocracy. The sedentarised Fulbe and the nomads - also those who had not taken part in the Fulbe conquests, profited from this favourable situation thanks to their common identity, that was expressed in the concept of *pulaaku*.

So we can conclude that as a result of the political organisation of the Sokoto Empire in the last century, the sedentarised Fulbe in North Cameroon had a centralized political organisation, contrary to the Mafa (and many other ethnic groups). Every district was governed by a chief, *lamido* and the district paid taxes to his court. In Islamised Fulbe society women played no role in the official political organisation. However, Uthman dan Fodio clearly stressed that Fulbe women were entitled to get education. Many Islamic Fulbe women were literate, had definite opinions about the political situation and undoubtedly played their role behind the scenes (see also: Boyd and Shagari 1978;1986). Female Marabouts do exist and may exercise power in the community. Sedentarised Fulbe women never work the land, but in economically low strata they hold onto their independent economic activities, which especially concern the selling of milk. Thus was the situation the Germans met, when they started to conquer the North of Cameroon in January 1899, when an expedition started out from Douala. In the same

period the British invaded the Sakata Empire. For the Mafa, the centralized political structure of first the Fulbe rulers, then the colonial rulers, and finally the centralized government of Cameroon after independence has been much more shocking and strange to them than to some of the other ethnic groups.

Colonial Policy

The Mafa, unlike many ethnic groups in the plains, had resisted integration within the Sokoto Empire in the pre-colonial period. During the colonial period their integration did not meet with great success either, as will become evident in the course of this paragraph. When the colonial powers invaded the area, the Fulbe rulers had a choice between peaceful submission, emigration or being killed. The Germans systematically broke down the authority of the Fulbe rulers in the whole district. Some of these rulers thought it was futile and suicidal to fight against guns. They came to an agreement and accepted German authority. Notwithstanding the regular slave raids in the Mafa area, there had not been a *lamidat* that exercised absolute authority over the region. Through the interference of the Germans, this situation changed. The Germans had enthroned *lamido* Hamman Yadjji in Madagali, after having chopped off the head of his father because of the latter's subversive activities (Eldridge 1988:282, handwritten manuscript in Mokolo archives). Due to his promise to be loyal to the colonial authorities, they enlarged the borders of his *lamidat* onto the Matakam plateau, so part of the Mafa region, which from then on fell under his reign. Hamman Yadjji founded a post, which was to become a town, named Mokolo. He sent servants he could trust - former slaves who had become Islamised, to this place and it developed into an Islamic centre in the Mafa area. Raids into the area could more easily be launched. Hamman Yadjji kept account of them, as well as of how many slaves he captured, the amount of cattle he took, the number of women and men he killed, and he described his contacts with the colonizers, or as he called them, the Christians, *Nasaara'en*. A short impression:

April 23, 1913: On Saturday, the 20th of Ramadan, the Oberlleutenant arrived in Madagali and spent five days there.

Aug. 28, 1913: On Thursday, the 25th of Ramadan, he left Madagali and went to Duhu. In the month of Julandu, the Governor and the

Oberlleutenant departed and I took leave of them safely. He sent Kobavin and Riskou to Gour, and God be praised for that.

During the First World War. the French and English fought the Germans; Hamman Yadjji briefly mentioned:

Dec. 12, 1914: On Saturday, the 24th of Kubarran Awwal, the French Christians arrived in Madagali and the people of Madagali all ran away. There were four white men.

Dec. 16, 1914: On Wednesday, the 28th of Haram Awwal, I sent the Frenchman 77 shillings. Febr. 2, 1915: On Tuesday, the 18th of Haram Akhir, we raided Kurang and got 100 cattle. Governor 'Diri' (Duhring) fought with the English and killed two white men of the English. I raided Hurumzi and captured four slave girls and 20 cattle.

Nov. 1st, 1918: On Friday the 25th of Haram Awwal at night, news about the tax arrived from the Lieutenant. In the morning, I sent off Kobo and Buba to Maroua followings allegations that fighting had erupted between the French and the Germans.

Lavergne remarks that those military operations did not affect the Mafa population, who remained subjected to the same *lamido* (Lavergne 1949, 1990), it was only after the delimitation of 1920, whereby the French and the English split up the territory, that Madagali was attached to Nigeria while Mokolo was assigned to Cameroon. Hamman Yadjji wrote:

August 8, 1920: On Monday, the 16th of Siutorandu, a letter arrived from the Captain saying that the English were coming. Then on Wednesday, another letter arrived saying that my land has been transferred from the French to the English. Let us hope that the French are telling lies.

Sept.10, 1920: On Friday, the 26th of Laihaji, between the two hours of prayer in the evening and the sunset. I received two letters, one from the Emir of Yola and the other from the Captain. They concerned the coming of the English, and said that an Englishman from Verma and the Captain of Maroua were to meet on my land between Waha and Habada in order to fix the boundary of my land.

June 16, 1921: On Thursday, the 10th of Juldandu, two Christians went out to mark the boundary of my land, and they cut off a very large part of it on the Maroua side. So Mafa territory was split in two halves, one to be administered from the English side and the other one from the French side. However, the clans continued to live as before and resisted the new authority. The written accounts of Hamman Yadjji emphasize another

distinction between the two peoples: the Islamic Fulbe were a literate people, while the Mafa (and many other ethnic groups) were not.

In January 1922, a military post was founded by the French. It was officially named: *subdivision du Mandara, chef lieu Mokolo*. Mokolo was designated as an administrative centre by the French colonial government. According to Martin (1970), the French were aware of the difficulty of governing the non-centralized Mafa people. They were conscious of the fact that to place them under Fulbe government could only produce results of short duration. But the directives from the central government in Yaounde remained the same and favoured indirect rule. The French administrators were unstable, inadequate, and too few in number. From 1922 to 1939, 18 sub-divisional officers subsequently served in only 17 years. An officer had only his militia to assist him in his subdivision. So the French made use of the existing political Fulbe structure. Due to language problems and the fact that they depended on Fulbe-oriented interpreters, they only looked at Mafa affairs through Fulbe eyes. The fact that they called the Mafa '*Matakam*' a Fulbe nickname, derived from the Fulbe word *Mettayamen*, a self-conceited term, reserved for those creatures that Mother nature did not favour too much (Lavergne 1949; also Martin 1970: 16), may serve as one indication for this fact. It goes without saying that the opinion of the Fulbe towards these 'Pagan' people, those '*haabe*' (infidels) was not very favourable and they, certainly had no eyes for the political and social structure or the cultural values of the Mafa.

Lawan *Riskou*, a former slave from the area, was invited to install himself in Mokolo. His function as 'chief of the indigenous people', i.e. the Mafa, consisted in helping the administrators with construction work and accompanying, as guide and helper, the French troops who were charged with pacification (put an end to clan wars and slave raids) and tax collection in the Mafa territories. Thus the French ignored the fact that most former slaves had become Islamized and that Islamisation in the area meant a new identity and a total adaptation to and acceptance of the Fulbe way of life (as described in detail elsewhere, see van Santen 1993) including the Fulbe political hierarchy. Centralized authority and hierarchy was difficult to accept for the Mafa. Captain Vallin, sub-district officer of Mokolo' wrote in 1924:

... dans toutes ces affaires ce n'est pas l'impôt plus ou moins abondant qui est en jeu, mais le principe. Le versement de l'impôt est

le signe de soumission des Matakam (Mafa) et eux-mêmes ne s'y trompent pas. Tant que le Matakam (Mafa) n'a pas ce geste de soumission, il se considère Independent de notre autorité (Mokolo archives, also in Martin 1970: 181).

Yet the Mafa did not see the necessity of these taxes and kept resisting them. As a result and regardless of the fact that he was originally Mafa, Lawan Riskou was killed (in 1924) by the Mafa in Ladamsay near Mokolo during one of his tours. Underscores the resistance and the contempt of the Mafa for the Fulbe, the Fulbe hierarchy and those who had become islamised, which for the Mafa meant collaboration with the Fulbe, even if they came from their own region. Those who resisted, held on to their own values and political system but it is, self-evident that they had no influence whatsoever in the administration of the colonial government and that the colonial rulers in turn kept bothering them.

In town, the Muslim community slowly grew, as many Mafa - women as well as men, moved to town to live with relatives or in search for jobs and consequently were converted to Islam. Islamisation meant, as we said before, a change of identity and the Muslim townspeople in those days more or less looked down upon their non-Islamic relatives, as the latter were considered to be 'infidels', 'heathens', '*haabe*', illiterates and uncivilised people who went around in their goat-skins and their 'cache-sex'. After the death of Lawan Riskou, other Fulbe *lamibe*, from the Madagali-court were appointed by the French and the Muslim community in town slowly grew. The unequal balance between Islamised people and the Mafa continued during the whole colonial period, but as more and more dignitaries were Islamised Mafa, they were tolerated by the Mafa who slowly started to get used to the fact that they had to pay taxes instead of killing the tax-collector with bow and arrow. They also learned to settle their disputes at the *lamido's* place, though their own social and political system continued to be the major point of reference to them. On the fourth of April 1930, captain Vallin made the following remarks:

.... La tournée de Mr. le Sous lieutenant Chabal sera fructueuse. Les Kirdis (heathen) Matakam (Mafa) visites ont accepte le contact en 1927. Chaque annee, permet d'enregistrer chez eux des progres sensibles.

But not all the missions proceeded smoothly. The same sub-lieutenant Chabal wrote that he 'had to' burn down whole quarters with houses in 1930, and that he encountered severe aggression in 1931 in Djou, near Ziver. Lieutenant Laroussin le mentions in his report of the tax-collecting mission in Ziver in 1937, that this particular region is still very undisciplined:

Le village de Ziver (near Magoumaz, about 10 km. from Mokolo) par lequel nous débutâmes, est le plus indiscipliné et même le plus agressif. Des 22 villages de Mokolo, c'est le seul qui a toujours refuse de s'acquitter de son impôt et ses habitants vivent en mauvais termes avec leurs voisins (Mokolo archives: Rapport de tournée 1937).

'Incidents' continued to occur. The administrators also had problems with the censuses they took. By 1940, the French were aware that only an indigenous government could control the people. Nonetheless this was only put into practice when Mokolo became a civil administration. Then they started to recognize the jurisdictions, modify the divisions of the cantons and regroup as many Mafa people as possible under the direct administration of Mokolo subdivision. The French then wanted a decentralized homogeneous power structure in which they could use clan leaders. Six direct administration groups were formed reflecting the ethnic differences of the Daba, Goude, Bana, Mofu, Kapsiki and Mafa. But the majority of the Mafa still resorted under the two large cantons of Mokolo and Mozpgo (north of Koza), which were under the command of a Fulbe chief (Martin 1970:43). It was only that in 1957 Mokolo was divided officially into a Fulbe canton, with a Fulbe *lamido* (Idrissou) and a Mafa canton with another *lamido* for the Mafa (Magadji Djamare). However, this Mafa *lamido*, was an Islamised Mafa, who had accepted the Fulbe political system. Though in this period it was somewhat more acceptable, it still meant that the rural Mafa had to accept a different political structure. The Islamised Mafa in town all lived in the Muslim quarters and fell under the reign of the Fulbe *lamido*, a fact they totally agreed upon. The French had also installed an administrative system, including a customary law tribunal - where these had previously resorted under the 'village' chiefs and clan elders. The organisation of canton chiefdoms and 'quarter' chiefdoms was another political change with a great impact for the Mafa. This entailed a change from local politics to regional politics. The Mafa did not know this level before. As mentioned above, the

French had taken Fulbe political organisation as an example. In this system, the *lamido* of Mokolo gives orders to the ‘quarter chiefs’, who command the villagers. Obviously, these chiefs do not have the same authority as the ‘traditional’ Mafa ‘mountain’ chiefs. Order within the area was no longer maintained exclusively by the latter, as the armed government forces intervened more frequently as had been possible before. As wrote Jourdain, *chef de la subdivision* of Mokolo in 1957, about another clan clash that was about to start due to:

... une coutume que nous comprenons difficilement. Ce conflit, fréquent en saison sèche, période de deoeuvrement, n’a pas été provoqué par des rivalités de familles ou de villages, mais bien par une coutume caractéristique des populations encore primitives, ne venant que lentement à la civilisation (M. Jourdain; Archives de Mokolo. No.132/L/SMK, 1957).

Whereas the Mafa were considered as primitive, the French have always had great admiration for the Fulbe ‘colourful’ customs, thereby favouring the Islamic community. Christianisation and (secular) scolarisation started relatively late in the area. The first official ‘western’ school in the area was opened on May 1, 1934. In 1937 Laroussinle noticed the first ‘fruits of progress’. He wrote:

...D’ailleurs la cadence de leur évolution, pour un esprit observateur est très rapide en raison de leurs facilite d’imitation (sic!). Un exemple nous en est donné par l’école, où les Kirdis tout aussi primitifs que leurs camarades de jeux de la montagne, en trois ans apprennent à comprendre et à parler le français, à lire, écrire, compter et sont capables de rédiger une petite lettre ... (Rapport de la Tournée du Lieutenant Laroussinle, March 1937, Mokolo Archives)

The first mission school (of the Oblates of Mary), was established in 1945 and another in 1951. A Catholic mission was established in Djinglya in 1953 (15 km. south of Mokolo). The mission of the Seventh Day Adventist Church was established at the foot of the massifs of Koza in 1946 and has an affiliate in Mokolo. The Sudan United Mission asked permission to settle first

in Sulede and afterwards in Mokolo. (Mokolo archives; Le probleme du commandement a Mokolo, without date; also in Martin 1970). In the North these mission activities and the scolarisation efforts in particular, started to bear fruit relatively late. For a long time, the decisive role of Islam kept up the suspicion towards European education, which had to compete with the Qu'ran schools among the Islamic population. The latter considered religious education far more important than secular education. As an Islamised informant narrated recalling those days:

We were Mafa and had lost our parents. We stayed at the lamido's court, where captain Lavergne had brought us. They asked if we wanted to attend primary school. In those days nobody wanted to go to school. It was only the children of slaves who went and children whose father and mother had died, like me and my brother; Sometimes they took children to make them go to school by force, and then the parents gave a goat to the master and they let the children go again. That was because they did not know What a school was. There was only one primary school in those days. There was one headmaster; his name was Gokla, which means pipe, because he always used to smoke a pipe. There were only two classes, not six like nowadays. And there was another school in Koza.

After Independence

After independence, which was instituted on the 1st of January, 1960, the indirect administrative system of the French remained fairly intact in the North and has been functioning ever since. It incorporated the district chiefs (*chefs de subdivision*), who in precolonial Fulbe Society had been so important. In their papers of appointment, they are referred to as traditional chiefs. The local (especially Islamic) population still very much honour these chiefs. Mokolo remained a division named Mayo Tsanaga, ruled by a *prefet*. In 1967 it was subdivided into four homogeneous Subdivision: Koza, Moskola and Gabua (replacement of the old canton of Mozogo, afterwards called Matakam Nord) and Matakam South, which corresponds to the former Mokolo canton. The *lamibe*, now canton chiefs, answer directly to the head of the subdepartment (*sous-prefet*) of Mokolo. They form the administrative link between the subdepartment and the 'village chiefs'. They have to maintain

the order and uphold the rules of traditional law. They collect taxes and intervene in local disputes: when men complain that their women ran away and when women complain about their menfolk; when difficulties arise between the cultivators and the pastoralists, or when the cattle of the latter destroys farmers crops; when smuggling activities get out of hand; they further construct schools and recruit pupils. However, also after independence the non-Islamic population had limited access to state institutions and the different ethnic groups were represented by their Islamised members, who, as we said before, had changed identity and taken over Fulbe cultural elements and had adjusted to Fulbe political hierarchy, though in our area - contrary to other regions in the North, they never claimed to be ethnically Fulbe. In the Mafa canton in Mokolo, reigned Magadji Djamare, and Islamised Mafs, who was succeeded by his son Mohammadou Magadji. During the reign of Ahidjo 1960- 1982 - and also afterwards, these clan leaders were loyal to the only political party, the U.N.C. (*Union Nationale Camerounaise*), called R.D.P.C. (*Rassemblement Democratique du Peuple Camerounais*) under Biya. The political party tried to establish itself in the various regions, so also in the region under concern. The Muslims in the area had no arguments with that as long as Ahidjo, a Muslim from Garoua, was president. Whether the non-Muslims in the area agreed is hard to say, as no opposition was allowed. During my first fieldwork period, nobody ever talked politics. Even my carefully composed questions, asked between the four walls of my house were hardly answered. The quarter chiefs in the Mafa regions - newly created post; had to be members of the political party. Their relation with the local 'traditional' leaders in the area could be tense, due to different interests and loyalties.

During the reign of Ahidjo, the North was represented in the state institutions by Islamic Northerners. Though independence may have led to a decrease in traditional Fulbe hierarchy and a decline in the power of the Fulbe elite and Fulbe cultural exportation, the social groups that profited from this decline, - the chiefs from originally different ethnic groups like the Mafa chief Magadji, notables of Islamic non-Fulbe groups and the Fulbe of non-aristocratic background - were nearly all Islamic, since Ahidjo's regional politics in the North favoured the Islamic population (also: Bayart 1979: 191).

During this period, the non-Islamic members of the numerous ethnic groups in the North hardly participated in the Northern supremacy of the

Ahidjo regime (Bayart 1989: 231 footnote). The party president for Mokolo region, Boubakary Tchoude, who represented the population in the National Assembly (The House of Commons) was a sincere Muslim and I presume' of Fulbe background. It may seem that the different ethnic groups are not the only ones to unequally share in the political power; but they share this unfavourable position with women in general. However, within the different institutions in Mokolo a good number of women could be found, who occupied public positions. These were often Islamic or Islamised women from Mafa or other ethnic backgrounds. In Guider (80 km. south of Mokolo) one of the two party deputies was an Islamised woman, from Giziga background.

New Political Developments

The balance changed somewhat when Cameroon got a Christian president from the South, Paul Biya, in 1982. Many Muslim divisional heads, sub-divisional heads and other administrative officers in the North were replaced by Christian Southerners. It then became easier for non-Muslim Mafas to get a job in the administration, so these changes worked to their advantage.

Cameroon had always been considered as a relatively wealthy - due to the oil, and thus successful African country by the Western powers. The economic decline started in the Biya period. After the Structural Adjustment Programme of the I.M.F., Cameroon got into an even more precarious economic position. The call for democracy and a National Conference got louder. Demonstrations were held, and the opposition parties organized strikes throughout the country, called 'villes mortes' 'ghost towns'. This meant that for a whole week, no shops should be open or commercial activities be undertaken, except on Sundays. In Mokolo, the quarter chiefs were intimidated by CPDM officials got the following message:

We have orders not to shoot in case of riots, but we are not sure ourselves, if we, will follow those orders. So the quarter chiefs, knowing their population, tried to keep the discontented people, especially the youth, off the streets. Things got out of hand only once, when an angry crowd headed for the customs office and burnt it down. Legislative elections were held off in March 1992. In Mokolo, several political parties took part in the elections.

However, only three are important in our story: the existing political party (the C.P.D.M.) and the opposition parties M.D.R. (Mouvement pour la Defence de la Republique) and U.N.D.P. (Union Nationale Pour le Developpement et le Progres). The old rivalries between the Islamic community and the Mafa population, surfaced in the voting behaviour. Many non-Muslim Mafas voted C.P.D.M.; the Muslim quarters voted U.N.D.P., which was led by a Muslim (Fulbe) Northerner. The M.D.R. did not get enough votes, so these votes went to the C.P.D.M. and the U.N.D.P. Consequently these parties could each send three deputies to the National Assembly.

Asked about their voting behaviour, the Mafa, men as well as women, said that they did not want the old times back. They associate Bouba Bello, the leader of the N.U.D.P. who had returned from a long exile, with the court of Madagali, the town which had played such an important role in the suppression of the Mafa people at the beginning of this century. At the same time, the N.U.D.P. repeatedly tried to show that their party should not be associated with the old regime from the time of Ahidjo, and that they are a totally new party. The Mafa population does not seem convinced yet. An informant said:

One vote for C.P.D.M. is not a vote for Paul Biya, but we do not want back the old times of Muslim domination. The M.D.R.'s political pamphlets in particular referred to the Fulbe political domination:

Les KIRDIS sont à nouveau écartés de la prise des décisions sur la gestion des affaires politiques administratives du pays sous prétexte qu'ils n'ont aucun poids économique et ne constituent pas un groupe de pression politique. Sinon, comment expliquer l'absence totale et flagrante des Kirdis dans le gouvernement actuel, alors que tous les Ministres Nordistes qui s'y trouvent sont Musulmans? Comment expliquer encore que sur les dix gouverneurs en poste, il y a deux Nordistes et tous les deux sont comme par hasard Musulmans? .. Tout récemment, lorsque le Premier Ministre a invité les Lamibe du Nord pour consultation, ceux des Kirdis ont été exclus! ... Nos parents et nous-mêmes avons souffert atrocement et soutiendrons encore de tout cela: il n'est plus question que nos enfants en souffrent encore!

Nationally, the M.D.R. formed a coalition with the ruling party and appointed an Islamized Mafa Minister of Town Planning and Housing. One may wonder if the revelation of the old days will fall on fertile ground in Mokolo. In most families, one has Pagan as well as Islamized family members and as I have shown elsewhere, people keep in touch (van Santen 1993). During recent meetings in which political parties met, I could observe that the members of different political parties were obviously present, as they wore the garments, boubou's with the text of their political parties. They intermixed and discussed with one another in a friendly way. During my visit in 1992, there certainly was much more political openness and discussion in town. When I entered the post-office, people were discussing the latest development in loud voices. I looked at them and expressed my feelings:

'Who could have thought a couple of years ago that you would have these discussions ... , I am so surprised.' They laughed and answered: 'Then it was in our minds, now it is in our mouth'. I even heard children in the streets singing the following song, an event that would have been impossible up to 1990: Paul Biya, he may still be president but soon he will be no more than an ordinary merchant at the market, and his wife ... she will soon be nothing more than a seller of fish at the fish market (this was a few days before her sudden death). As we all know soon afterwards Paul Biya was (claimed to have been) re-elected as president.

At weddings in the Muslim quarter, where only women are present, the song of the U.N.D.P. opposition party was the most popular music to dance to in 1992. Now weddings in the Muslim quarter are a women's affair so this is only one expression of the fact that women are politically-minded and have as much an opinion on the new political situation as their husbands, brothers or sons have. In 1992, when I stayed with friends in the Islamic as well as in the Mafa quarters of town, many Muslim women vote for the U.N.D.P., while Mafa women are inclined to vote for either M.D.R., or C.P.D.M. I noticed that women whose families Islamized one or two generation ago, were then in support of U.N.D.P.

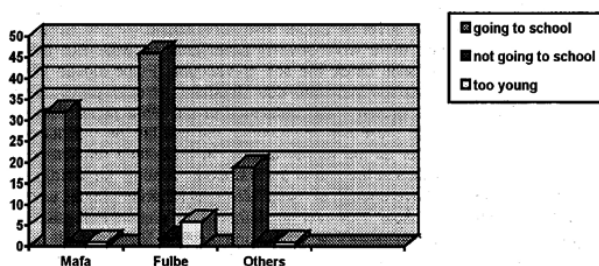
In 1995 this attitude seemed to have changed again. Following the continuing economic decline, voting behaviour was very much attached to economic advantages. Rumours went around that the C.P.D.M. was buying people's membership. However, my stay was too short to verify these rumours. I have also observed that the developments of the recent period still had other consequences. In 1986, Mokolo as a town still had an Islamic

character, though there existed non-Muslim quarters in town. To my greatest surprise Fulfulde and not Mafa was the lingua franca, even at the market place. These days, so it seems, Mokolo is becoming more and more a Mafa town. The political openness has led to a larger ethnic consciousness. Mokolo has become an urban centre for Mafa people from the different clans who, till independence, still occasionally fought each other in clan wars. Before, such an ethnic consciousness was present among those people who moved far away. For the Mafa in the rural areas till recently, the only alternative was to be a Muslim. Non-Muslims were by definition Mafa.

The new ethnic consciousness may also be a result of the difference in formal education. In the area of education the North still backward to the rest of Cameroon. In 1976, the school enrolment rate in the North in general was still rather low compared to the South of Cameroon. In 1976 the percentage of the two sexes in the North were 21,9%, while it was 64,8% in other parts of Cameroon. For males the percentages were respectively 28,7% against 68,3%, while for females they were 14,4% against 61%. In the North, the literary rate was 82,6% for men and 94,2% for women (Bureau Central du Recensement, 1980 p.17,40 & 87 in: Gubry 1995). The percentages given are for the rural as well as the urban areas.

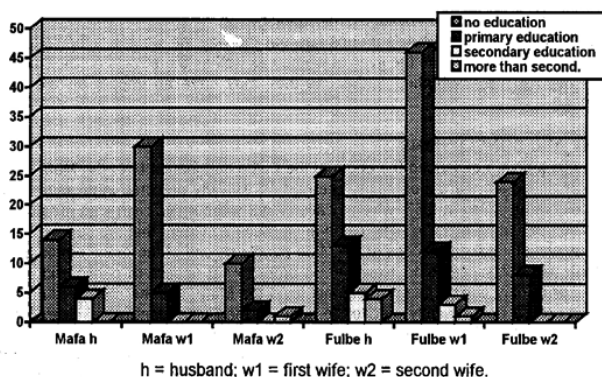
Nevertheless, it should be noted that these figures do not include Islamic education. As said before, many Fulbe (women as well as men) were literate and went to Qu'ranic schools, Islamised Mafa would also send their children (girls as well as boys) to Qu'ranic schools, as in Fulbe society learned scholars may accomplish high status, but secular education was associated with those white people, who were '*Nasaara'en*', infidels, *Haabe*, and thus inferior. Many women and men not included in the official statistics may not be able to speak French but they read and write arabic as well as Fulfulde in Arabic script. In former days, the Muslims were in power, though few of them had had a Western education. For them status was based on a 'profound' Islamic education. As we mentioned earlier, the Mafa started to attend secular education much sooner than the Islamic population, and also the percentage of Mafa who finished secondary school seems to be higher. Following my own data for Mokolo, gathered in 1987 and 1988 the level of education of the new generation in town is much higher as shown in the following diagrams:

Graph 1: Level of education of children in Mokolo



Compared with the level of education of the former generation - divided by the level of men and first wives -, the change is enormous.

Graph 2: Level of education of husbands, first wives and second wives in Mokolo



The new self-awareness of the Mafa also expresses itself in the following events. In 1991 elections were held among the population of both cantons to choose the new *lamibe*, as the Islamised Mafa *lamido* Mohammadou Magadji, as well as the Fulbe *lamido* Idrissou - who had reigned since 1948, died in 1990. In principle everyone could be candidate, but of course one needed money to have a dossier made. There were eight candidates for the Mafa position. A remarkable sign of the new ethnic consciousness was the fact that two of them were Mafa who still practised their own religion (from Mandaka and Mendezje), members of a *bi-gwali*, chief clan, and one a Christian (from Soulédé), also a member of a *bi-gwali* (chief clan). The newly chosen Mafa *lamido* was a Muslim though not related to the former Mafa *lamido* (only the patri-clan on mother's side, the *kuyuk*, was the same). His name was Oumarou Tjamaka; he came from Ladamzay (the

place where in history lawan Riskou had been killed) and also descended from a *bi-gwali* (chief clan). He only reigned for two years and died in 1994. Asked if there had been any female candidates; my informants laughed. They said that such was not possible, as a woman within Mafa society can never be 'bigger' than her husband.

For the Fulbe canton there were several candidates as well. But the seven quarters formerly ruled by Idrissou chose the son of Yacoubé (Fulbe *lamido* in Mokolo from 1928 to 1946), called Yacouba Mohammadou Mourtalla. As said, partly due to the new political situation and the growing self-confidence of the Mafa population, the old division between the Mafa and the Fulbe re-emerged: the two *lamibe* did not keep as good a relation with each other as the former *lamibe*. In 1992, they refused to gather together to pray for the festivities at the end of the Ramadan. Among the Mafa, one may hear the argument that they have enough of these *Madagali* Nigerian princes who raided them in the past, reigning in Mokolo'. However, the father of the present Fulbe *lamido* (son of Yacouba) as well as the *lamido* himself were born and raised in Mokolo.

A phenomenon I discovered during my stay in 1992, is the fact that several women's groups had come into existence (a single group could number about fifty women). They undertook all sorts of activities, among which the cultivation of a plot of land of their own. The members of these groups are women of Mafa background, who are Islamic, Pagan or Christian. But women of other ethnic backgrounds who have settled in town for various reasons are also members. As it looks now, women of different political backgrounds discuss their problems within these groups. These problems may be on a household level but often include politics. Women are highly aware of the current political situation. Within these groups, Mafa women also question the issue of their access to land. This is regulated by customary laws as well as the new legislative system and _ in the case of converted women - by an Islamic ideology.

Though not all the women's groups turn out the way the women expected, these interesting developments within the lives of women as well as the effects on their political behaviour need to be researched further, as they may have an impact on the public political arena.

Summary and Conclusions

In this article, I described the origin of the Fulbe domination over the Mafa people in the mountainous Mandara-mountains. I started off with my personal impression of the National celebrations Day in 1987, which I called - not without cynicism - an ideal-typical demonstration of 'nation-building'. The celebration made it evident that the suppression of the religious and

cultural differences of the Mafa-people as one of the many ethnic groups of the North had not succeeded. However, in order to get access to public and private resources, or to play one's role on a regional level the Mafa, like the members of many other ethnic groups until recently, needed to adapt to the Fulbe identity, which translated itself in this particular region in the process of Islamisation and urbanization.

Nevertheless, some major differences can be observed between the Mafa and the ethnic groups in the plains. The Mafa had never known a centralized hierarchical political system nor had they lived in villages; they were scattered over the country-side. They were a caste-society, and until recently as a consequence of their decentralized political system, clan membership was far more important than ethnically Mafa. Those who became part of a larger community, and came to be surrounded by other ethnic groups became conscious of the fact that every person is also a member of the Cameroonian state. For those individuals being Mafa became a new identity. Consequently the process of 'nation-building' - to use the term again - enhanced rather than diminished the ethnic consciousness of the Mafa. A centralized political structure like the one of the Fulbe rulers, and thereafter the colonial authorities and, after independence, the centralized government of Cameroon had been unknown to the Mafa and has therefore been much more of a shock to them than for to some other groups.

Secondly, compared to other regions few Fulbe sedentarised villagers have settled in the Mafa rural area. There has been no competition for access to land between Mafa and Fulbe (unlike in other areas, see v.d.Berg this volume), as a consequence of the overpopulation, the inaccessibility of the mountains for large herds, the structure of the soil and the terraced fields which are totally unsuitable for pastures.

The colonial government regarded Mafa society as anarchic - there were no chiefs one could address oneself to - and this led to the established domination of the Mafa by the Fulbe political structure, while the Mafa had been able to resist this domination in pre-colonial periods. The colonial authorities used former Mafa slaves who had Islamised (see van Santen 1993: 86 *af.*; Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993).

In due time and as a consequence of push-and-pull factors, and chain-migration more Mafa women and men moved to Mokolo, the town that was created in the colonial period. These migrants later became Islamised, thereby accepting the Fulbe identity and political structure, though they

never claimed to be ethnically Fulbe. Until Paul Biya's accession to power, non-Islamic Mafa hardly played a political or economic role within the region nor on a national level. During the Biya-period, non-Islamic Mafa (at least those living in town) became better secularly educated than the Islamic population, who valued Islamic education more. This turned out to be to their advantage and they are better educated nowadays. Nevertheless, the role they are allowed to play on a regional or national level is growing only gradually.

During recent political and social developments, a rift emerged in the voting behaviour between the non-Islamic and the Islamic population. The latter voted UNDP while the non-Islamic people voted CPDM thereby emphasising that their vote was not a vote for Paul Biya, but that they just did not want back the old times of Fulbe domination. In their propaganda of 1992, the MDR used the division in the North between non-Muslims and Muslims and the dominating behaviour of the latter in the past. In my opinion this is a dangerous and unfruitful development.

In conclusion, I think that a consciousness of the historical past, in which one group dominated the other does not necessarily need to provoke old feelings of rivalry or suppression. On the contrary, in this article I deliberately paid attention to the historical fact that before the Fulbe dominated the North, - then they were still pastoralists - the sedentary ethnic populations sometimes treated the Fulbe very badly. In the same way the nomadic Fulbe (called M'bororo by non-Fulbe) are nowadays in a very unfavourable position. We ought to stress the fact that domination of one ethnic group over another works as a pendulum; groups dominating each other in turn. But a dominating position in the past does not need to involve a continuation of such dominating attitudes in the future. Awareness of the differences of other groups may lead to acceptance and co-operation. In that respect Cameroon could learn from the Northern area or the Mafa area especially; all families have Islamic and Christian members as well as members who hold on to their own religion. These people with different religious backgrounds still keep in contact as I mentioned in my book (1993:217). They live together peacefully and have intermixed with Fulbe people living in the area for generations. In many respects the common (so I mean the non- aristocratic) Fulbe and people from other ethnic groups depend on each other. As long as political parties like the MDR do not try to get votes by deliberately using old sentiments I think there is hope for the

Northern regions. But 'Northerners' also need to be accepted by the Southerners as 'complete' citizens and the Southern metropolis should stop referring to the Northerners as 'backward' people and treating as such.

Finally, in this article I also briefly mention women's role in the different political constellations. Briefly, not because I consider them as unimportant, but because their role in all political constellations were limited. However, it should be noted that women who do play their role in the local institutions and beyond, are nearly all Islamic women and the number of Islamic girls attending school in an urban area is nearly 100 %, while in the Mafa rural area far more boys than girls attend school. Another encouraging aspect is the formation of women groups at local levels, Within these groups women with different ethnic and religious backgrounds participate. These initiatives may serve as an example for their menfolk.

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Ethnicité Et Divergences Entre Le Pouvoir Central Et Les, Forces Vives Locales Sur La Régionalisation Au Cameroun: L'exemple Du Nord-Cameroun

Jean-Louis Dongmo

Introduction

Le Cameroun pratique depuis son accession à l'indépendance en 1960, une politique appelée "équilibre régional" dont le but avoué est la gestion harmonieuse et équitable de ses disparités spatiales: et surtout de sa diversité ethnique. En réalité, "équilibre régional" signifie principalement "équilibre ethnique". Une telle politique suppose le découpage préalable du territoire national en régions, opération dont l'ethnicité est l'un des critères essentiels, et qui associe comme partenaires le pouvoir central et les forces vives locales. Il existe entre ces deux catégories d'acteurs des divergences dans lesquelles l'ethnicité joue un rôle important. La présente étude se propose d'identifier et d'éclairer ces divergences en ce qui concerne le Nord-Cameroun pris comme exemple. On désigne ainsi la partie du Cameroun qui s'étend du 6^e au 13^e parallèles, couvrant 164 055 km² (34,53 % de la superficie du pays), et qui comptait au recensement de 1987, le dernier en date 1 183 045 habitants (30,33 % de la population du pays). Le plan du présent expose va s'articuler autour de "la variation du pouvoir central qui a été successivement incarné par le régime colonial, le régime Ahmadou Ahidjo et le régime Paul Biya. Mais auparavant, il faudra procéder à une rapide définition des concepts pour éviter les malentendus.

Définitions des Concepts

Régionalisation et région

L'organisation de l'espace terrestre par les sociétés humaines comporte plusieurs processus d'intervention parmi lesquels la gestion, qui assure le fonctionnement politique et administratif à travers la division de l'espace.

Ainsi, chaque gouvernement gère le territoire national en le divisant en unités hiérarchisées et intégrées.

Les termes de régionalisation et de région sont depuis longtemps attachés à cette division et à ces unités. Cette “mise en régions” ou régionalisation s’inscrit sur une interface terrestre qui porte elle-même ses propres régions et limites dans les éléments du milieu naturel (ligne de crête, fleuves, riviages) sur lesquels les hommes prennent appui ou non pour asseoir leurs divisions.

Il est nécessaire de rechercher à quoi correspondent les diverses régionalisations. A cet effet, avec P. et G. PINCHEMEL (1988), nous pouvons introduire une première distinction entre une régionalisation donnée et une régionalisation voulue. “La régionalisation donnée est issue du seul jeu des effets géographiques de multiples agents... Ainsi se constituent des régions climatiques, des régions agricoles, industrielles, ethniques, culturelles, religieuses. Ce sont des “régions résultats”. Les hommes les définissent à partir de l’observation de leurs éléments caractéristiques. La région voulue précède du besoin qu’ont les sociétés humaines de disposer d’une structure territoriale pour affirmer leur autorité, gérer les collectivités, intervenir, planifier, aménager”, Les distinctions entre ces catégories de régions ne sont pas tranchées, il arrive que les unes précèdent des autres dans un sens ou dans l’autre.

Les régionalisations reposent sur deux bases: l’homogénéité et l’interconnexion entre les faits observent. Ces deux bases produisent quatre logiques différentes:

- la logique naturelle: divisions fondées sur les domaines climatiques, géologiques, sur les bassins hydrologiques;
- la logique de l’homogénéité et de l’uniformité humaine, ces caractères homogènes pouvant être la prédominance d’une activité (région agricole, minière, touristique, ...), la prédominance d’une production, d’une spécialisation (région de coton, de riz, de pétrole ...), la prédominance d’un mode de peuplement (région rurale ou urbaine), la prédominance d’une appartenance ethnique, religieuse, culturelle (région Toupouri, région musulmane);
- la logique de la polarisation : la zone où s’exerce l’action prépondérante d’un centre urbain par exemple, parmi les fonctions polarisantes, il y a aussi la gestion politique, l’administration - la logique territoriale: Etat et territoire sont des notions liées (les fonctions essentielles de l’Etat sont le contrôle du territoire, le maintien de son intégrité, son

extension éventuelle, la rectification de ses frontières: sur le territoire s'exerce une autorité, une compétence: son étendue définit le champ d'application de ce pouvoir.

Le regain récent d'attention pour le territoire et la territorialité vécue a surtout concerne les petits territoires, ceux des communautés et des collectivités locales, les territoires du vécu quotidien qui constituent d'abord des réalités relationnelles pour les collectivités qui les habitent. La redécouverte récente du territoire, allant de pair avec la décentralisation, la conquête d'une plus grande autonomie, s'est faite contre l'Etat.

Il n'y a pas d'incorruptibilité entre les quatre logiques de régionalisation, pour la raison évidente qu'elles coexistent et se renforcent dans les mêmes étendues, Toute portion de la surface terrestre présente des caractéristiques qui la rattachent à l'un et à l'autre des processus de régionalisme, d'homogénéité, de polarisation, de territorialité administrative et/ou politique.

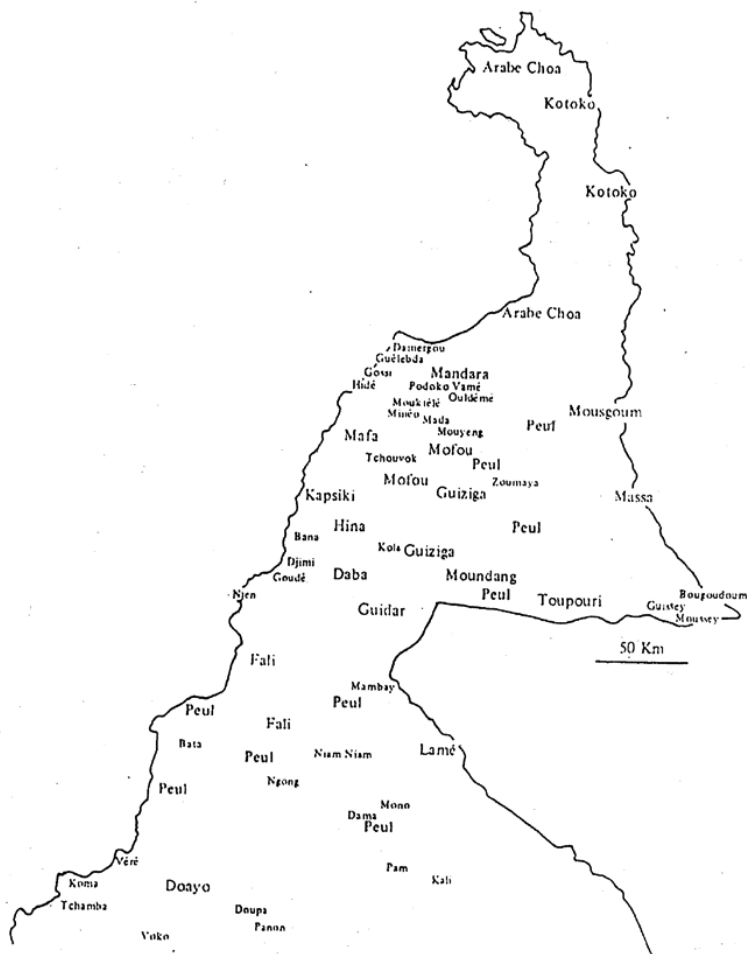
Ethnie et Ethnicité

Le concept d'ethnie a fait son apparition à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, en même temps qu'ethnologie et ethnographie qui désignaient l'étude des sociétés non européennes. Actuellement, le concept d'ethnie désigne une communauté humaine formée au cours de l'histoire, les membres étant unis par la conscience de leur communauté réelle dans le domaine de l'organisation sociale, de la culture et de la langue, et se sentent différents par rapport aux autres groupes humains. L'ethnie n'est pas quelque chose de figé: au cours de l'histoire elle se constitue et croît par assimilation d'apports extérieurs ou décroît par détachement d'éléments; c'est-à-dire qu'elle est soumise à un mouvement continu de recomposition. L'ethnie et l'ethnicité jouent actuellement un rôle important dans les stratégies politiques et sociales en Afrique.

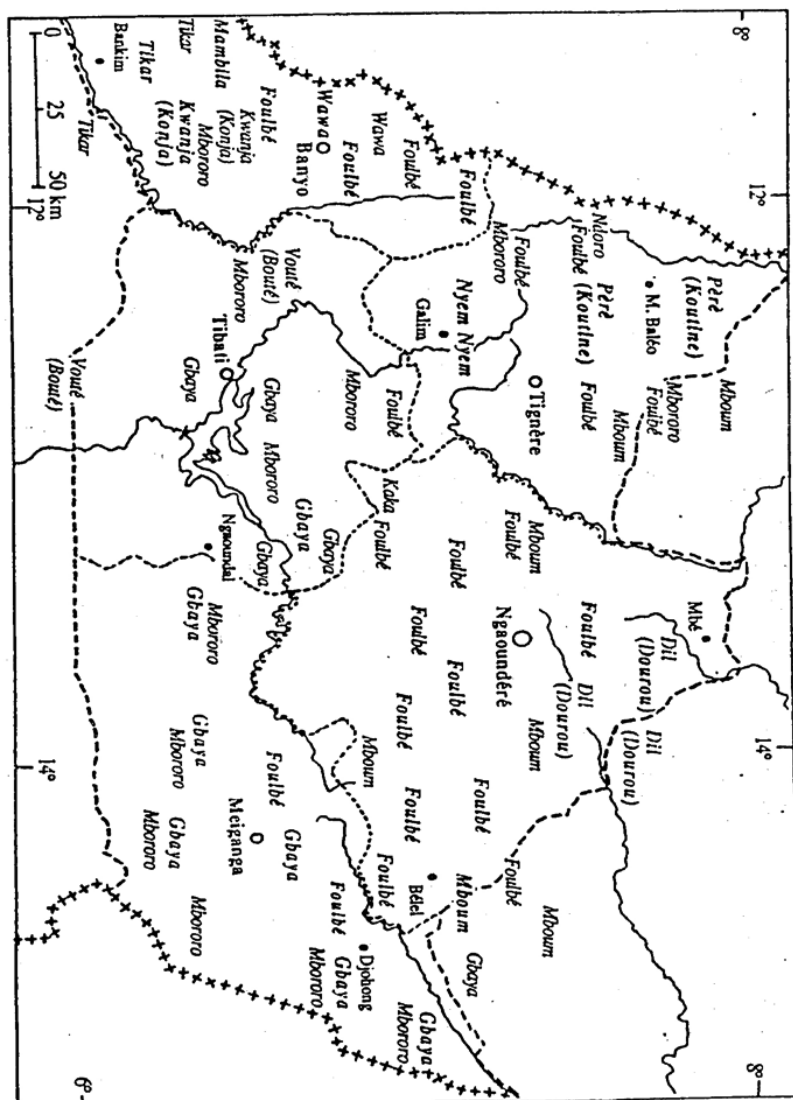
Les figures n° 1 et 2 (pages suivantes) se complètent pour présenter le visage ethnique du Nord-Cameroun dans les années 1940, c'est-à-dire avant que n'apparaissent les grands changements contemporains, migrations entre zones rurales et exode rural, cette décennie étant la dernière où la répartition spatiale des différents peuples correspondait à celle issue directement des rapports de forces précoloniaux. Il faut relever que les Peul ou Foulbé se répartissent sur la quasi-totalité du territoire en question, tandis que les autres

ethnies ont une implantation spatiale réduite, Grace aux recensements administratifs qui avalent l'habitude d'indiquer l'appartenance ethnique, pratique malheureusement abandonnée depuis l'accession du Cameroun à l'en 1960, nous allons tenter de donner une idée du poids numérique des différentes ethnies. Dans l'actuelle province de l'Extrême-Nord vivaient 707 265 habitants dont 38,99 % de musulmans et 61,01% d'animistes (BEAUVILAIN A., 1989). Les premiers se composent principalement des Peul (23,10 % du total et 59, 24 % des musulmans) et des Arabes Choas (8, 08 % du total et 20,74 % des musulmans). Parmi les secondasse détachent, en plaine les Toupouri (9,19 % du total et 15,07 % des animistes), les Massa (7,31 % du total et 13,98 % des animistes), les Mousgoums (5,69 % du total et 9,33 % des animistes), les Guiziga (4,86 % du total et 7, 97 % des animistes), et en montagne, les Mafa (9,99 % du total et 16,37 % des animistes), les Mofou (4,17 % du total et 6,83 % des animistes). A la même époque, "actuelle province du Nord comptait 226 162 habitants dont 41, 81 %de Peul et captifs, 12,94 % de Fali, 8,54 % de Guidar, 4,93 % de Dourou. On ne dispose pas de données pour l'actuelle province de l'Adamaoua, il est probable que les Foulbé et les animistes (Mboum, G'baya, Voute, Nyem Nyem etc. ...) y coexistaient dans des proportions comparables.

Fig.1.- Les Ethnies du Nord-Cameroun
 Source : BEAUVILAIN, A. (1989)



3. 2.- Localisation des populations de l'Adamaoua camerounais
Source : Peuples et cultures de l'Adamaoua, 1993



Au total, dans chacune des régions distinguées ci-dessus, les Peuls constituent le groupe le plus nombreux mais, pris ensemble, les peuples animistes sont de loin majoritaires. Les forces vives locales, qui vont fonctionner comme partenaire de la régionalisation au Nord-Cameroun, sont les émanations de ces différentes ethnies.

L'époque Coloniale

L'action régionalisante du pouvoir colonial a été constituée principalement de la mise en place des frontières internationales, du découpage administratif et de la création des villes destinées à polariser les unités administratives.

La Colonisation Allemande

La figure n° 3 représente le Cameroun allemand en 1910. Seule la partie septentrionale nous intéresse. Les frontières internationales ont déjà grosso modo la forme actuelle, mais elles délimitent un territoire plus vaste que l'actuel. Ce territoire est divisé en trois unités administratives. La plus grande se trouve au milieu et s'étire de la confluence de Lom et du Derme au Sud à un peu au Nord de Maroua. Elle est arrosée par les villes de Maroua, Garoua et N'Gaoundéré. La seconde unité s'étend au Sud-Ouest et elle est centrée sur la ville de Banyo. Quant à la troisième unité administrative, elle se situe au Nord et elle est animée par deux pôles: Kousséri sur la frontière Nord-Est, Mora près de la frontière Nord-Ouest. Une ligne de chemin de fer en projet devait relier Garoua à Douala sur la cote en passant par Banyo, laissant par conséquent de cote N'Gaoundéré et la plus grande partie de l'Adamaoua.

Des modifications sont introduites par le traité signé en 1911 par l'Allemagne, la puissance colonisatrice du Cameroun, et la France, la puissance coloniale voisine à l'Est. La frontière orientale est modifiée, au nord par la cession à la France d'une bande de terre baptisée "bec de canard", au sud par la réception de cette dernière d'un territoire étendu (fig. 4). Par ailleurs, la grande unité administrative, située au centre, est subdivisée en deux: au sud, une circonscription centrée sur N'Gaoundéré, au nord une autre animée par Garoua et Maroua.

La Colonisation Française

Le Nord-Cameroun constitue avec l'Est les deux régions du pays qui ont connu des changements dans leur découpage administratif pendant la colonisation française. Dans le Nord, il y a eu d'abord la fusion des circonscriptions de Banyo et de N'Gaoundéré en une vaste unité baptisée Adamaoua et placée sous le commandement de N'Gaoundéré; il y eu ensuite, l'amputation de la circonscription de Garoua de sa partie nord, érigée en circonscription de Maroua (1923). Cette dernière a été à son tour subdivisée en 1935 (fig. n°5), pour donner naissance aux "régions" du Logone (chef-lieu Maroua) et du Mandara (chef-lieu Mokolo). Enfin la région du Logone a été subdivisée en deux en 1959 pour donner naissance au Mayo-Danat commandé par Yagoua et au Diamaré commandé par Maroua (fig. n°6). Comme on le voit, le processus a consisté, mis à part le cas de l'Adamaoua, à créer des unités administratives moins vastes, donc plus contrôlables et plus adaptées aux réalités humaines. Chaque région est découpée en "subdivisions" qui serrent d'encore plus près les réalités humaines en épousant les contours des lamidats ou les limites des aires ethniques des animistes. A l'indépendance, ces "régions" deviendront des départements et ces subdivisions des arrondissements.

Un autre processus tout aussi important a fonctionné dans le Nord vers la fin de la colonisation française, inverse du précédent. Il s'agit d'une politique de régionalisation administrative, d'une certaine décentralisation administrative limitée au seul Nord Cameroun : un nouveau statut du territoire, adopté en 1956, prévoit la création d'une assemblée provinciale pour le Nord-Cameroun, un inspecteur général d'administration est nommé à Garoua ainsi que plusieurs délégués de services techniques. Le Nord Cameroun était ainsi unifié administrativement pour la première fois et placé sous le commandement de Garoua qui, par ailleurs, sur le plan économique, fonctionnait comme la porte de cette région, grâce à son port sur le fleuve Bénoué. Ce processus est l'aboutissement d'une action qui a commencé sur le terrain politique, le pouvoir colonial français promouvant l'unification des élites musulmanes du Nord afin d'utiliser leur alliance pour contrer l'action des élites du Sud qui, sous l'impulsion du parti U.P.C. (Union des Populations du Cameroun), revendiquent l'indépendance du territoire. Ce parti rencontre une vive résistance dans ses efforts pour s'implanter dans la partie musulmane du pays. Bah T. M. et Taguém Fah G.-L. (1993) relèvent à

cet égard que “plusieurs manifestations upecistes dans les zones musulmanes se soldèrent par un échec. Ainsi, en janvier 1955, l’U.P.C. créait à N’Gaoundéré une section et amorçait une active propagande qui suscitait une vive émotion parmi les populations musulmanes, les Foulbé s’inquiétant des menses d’ “agitateurs étrangers à leur pays et à leurs coutumes”.

“Loin de fondre dans le même moule les peuples camerounais sans distinction d’ethnies, de particularismes culturels et religieux, l’action des nationalistes camerounais a plutôt renforce le clivage nord-sud et les velléités séparatistes”. Plus explicite encore, les élites musulmanes, au plus fort de l’action upeciste, créèrent sous l’instigation de l’administrateur français LIOT une formation politique dénommée Mediafrancam (Médiation France-Cameroun) essentiellement dirigée contre l’U.P.C.

La première explication de ce comportement des élites musulmanes se trouve selon Bah T. M. et Taguem Fah G.-L. (1993), dans le substrat idéo-religieux : “L’islam a marqué de façon indélébile le comportement de l’élite musulmane, à l’égard de la lutte pour l’indépendance. Etymologiquement, “Islam” vient du verbe “Aslama” qui veut dire se soumettre. Cette religion prône l’obéissance à l’autorité en place car il est institué par Dieu et nul n’a le droit de contester l’ordre divin”. Les deux auteurs révèlent deux autres explications : le clivage Nord-Sud et les velléités séparatistes: le Nord étant moins développé économiquement et politiquement que le Sud, il est moins scolarisé aussi (6 % contre 86 % en 1955), au plan de l’adhésion aux religions étrangères, le Nord est musulman et le Sud chrétien. Cette disparité amène les élites musulmanes, au moment où leurs homologues du Sud luttent pour l’accession du pays à l’indépendance, à demander plutôt qu’on retarde cette accession à la souveraineté pour permettre à leur région de rattraper son retard sur le Sud, parce qu’ils craignent qu’elle soit le parent pauvre dans le futur Etat indépendant et à menacer de faire sécession pour se rattacher à un territoire français voisin, Oubangui-Chari ou Tchad, si leur demande n’était pas satisfaite. Cela servait certes les intérêts du pouvoir colonial français qui cherchait à justifier son maintien, cela a surtout servi à unifier le Nord-Cameroun en l’opposant au Sud, à en faire une région que le Sud doit ménager et séduire par des concessions importantes pour éviter qu’elle ne fasse sécession.

Tel est l’héritage qui, après l’Indépendance, va déterminer aussi bien l’action du Gouvernement que des forces vives locales en matière de régionalisation au Nord Cameroun. Pendant la période coloniale, seuls les

Foulbé ont joué un rôle dans cette affaire, les autres forces vives étant ignorées. Il n'en sera pas autant après l'Indépendance.

Fig.3.- Le Cameroun allemand (1910)

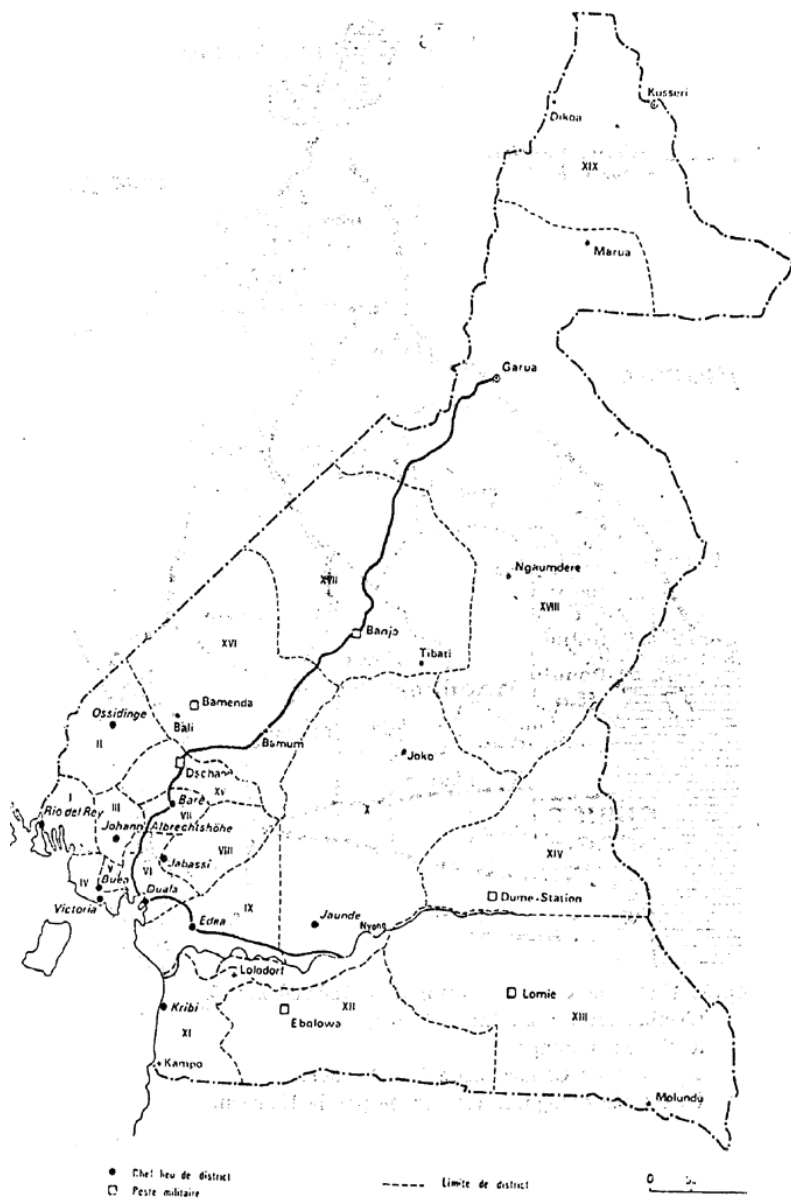
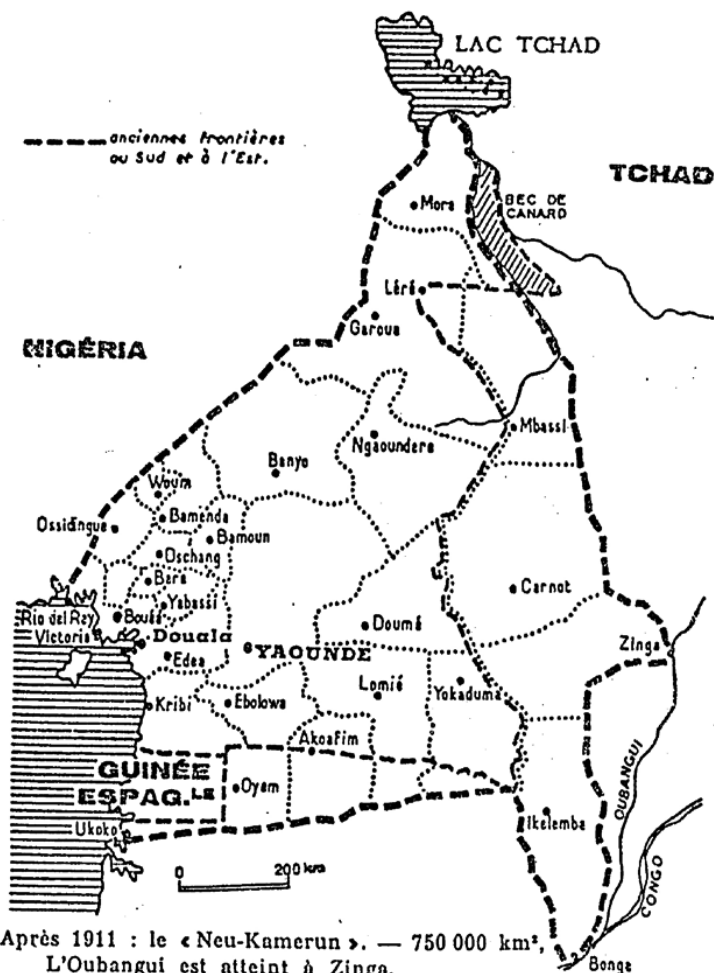


Fig. 4.- Le Cameroun après 1911
Source : MVENG, E., 1963



Après 1911 : le « Neu-Kamerun ». — 750 000 km²,
L'Oubangui est atteint à Zinga,
le Congo à Bonga,
et le Bec de Canard cédé à la France.
La Guinée espagnole est cernée par le Kamerun.

Sous Le Régime Ahmadou Ahidjo

Maintien et renforcement de l'unité du Nord pendant que le Morcellement du Sud s'accélère.

De 1958 à 1982, c'est un membre de l'élite musulmane du Nord, un Foulbé, Ahmadou Ahidjo, qui prend la relève du pouvoir colonial et dirige le Cameroun. Il maintient l'unité du Nord-Cameroun, telle que réalisée par le nouveau statut du territoire en 1956. En effet, non seulement, l'Inspection générale d'administration à Garoua pour le Nord est maintenue après l'Indépendance, mais encore, une loi de novembre 1960 étend ce système à l'Ouest où se fait sentir le besoin d'une coordination plus étroite entre les forces de l'ordre et les autres éléments de l'administration. Un peu plus tard, après la Réunification en 1961, ces structures sont transformées et étendues à tout le pays sous le nom d'inspections Fédérales d'Administration. Il y en avait six en tout: Nord, Ouest, Littoral, Centre-Sud, Est, Cameroun Occidental. Il y a eu aussi stabilité ou continuité au niveau du découpage en départements (héritiers des régions de l'époque coloniale), ce qui contraste avec le morcellement accéléré des départements du Sud-Cameroun (départements bamiléké en 1960, Nyong et Sanaga en 1964, Lom et Kader en 1965, etc.). En 1972, à l'occasion de la transformation des Inspections Fédérales en Provinces (fig. n° 7), le Cameroun Occidental est scindé en deux provinces, le Nord-Ouest et le Sud-Ouest. Ce découpage est ressenti un peu comme une banalisation du Cameroun Occidental qui, depuis la Réunification, était traité comme une région à part, une région dorlotée pour éviter qu'elle ne fasse sécession, un peu comme on l'avait fait pour le Nord au moment de l'Indépendance. Ce qui est important à retenir c'est que pendant ce temps, le Nord continuait à être traité comme une région à part, il était en tous points la plus grande région du pays, et qui, de ce fait recevait naturellement la plus grande part dans tout partage dans le cadre de la politique d'équilibre régional.

Fig.5.- Les divisions administratives du Cameroun en 1935

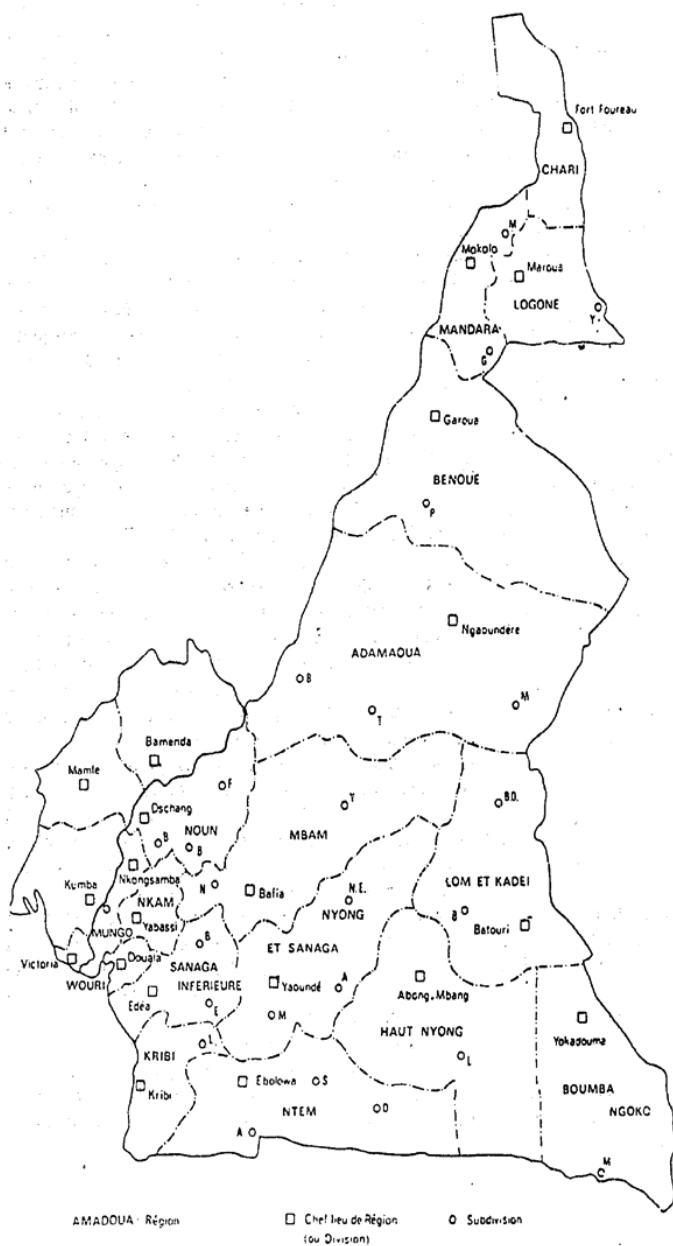


Fig.6.- Les divisions administratives du Cameroun au premier janvier 1960

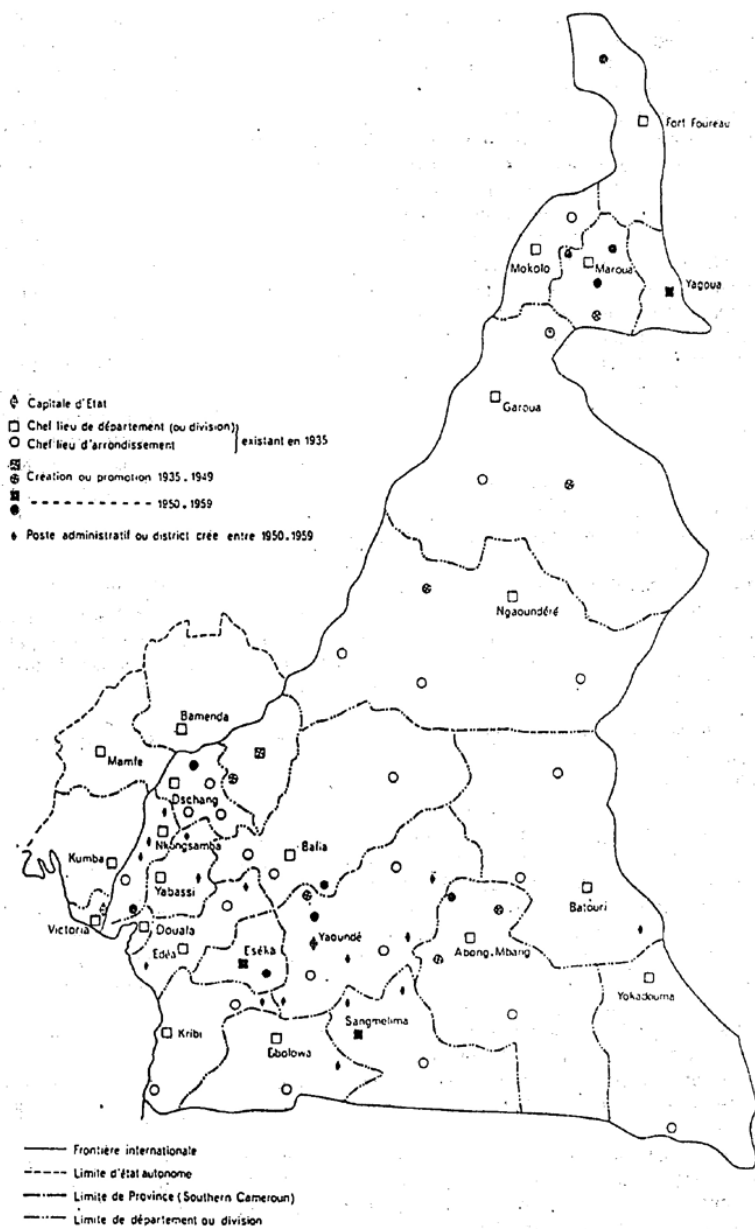
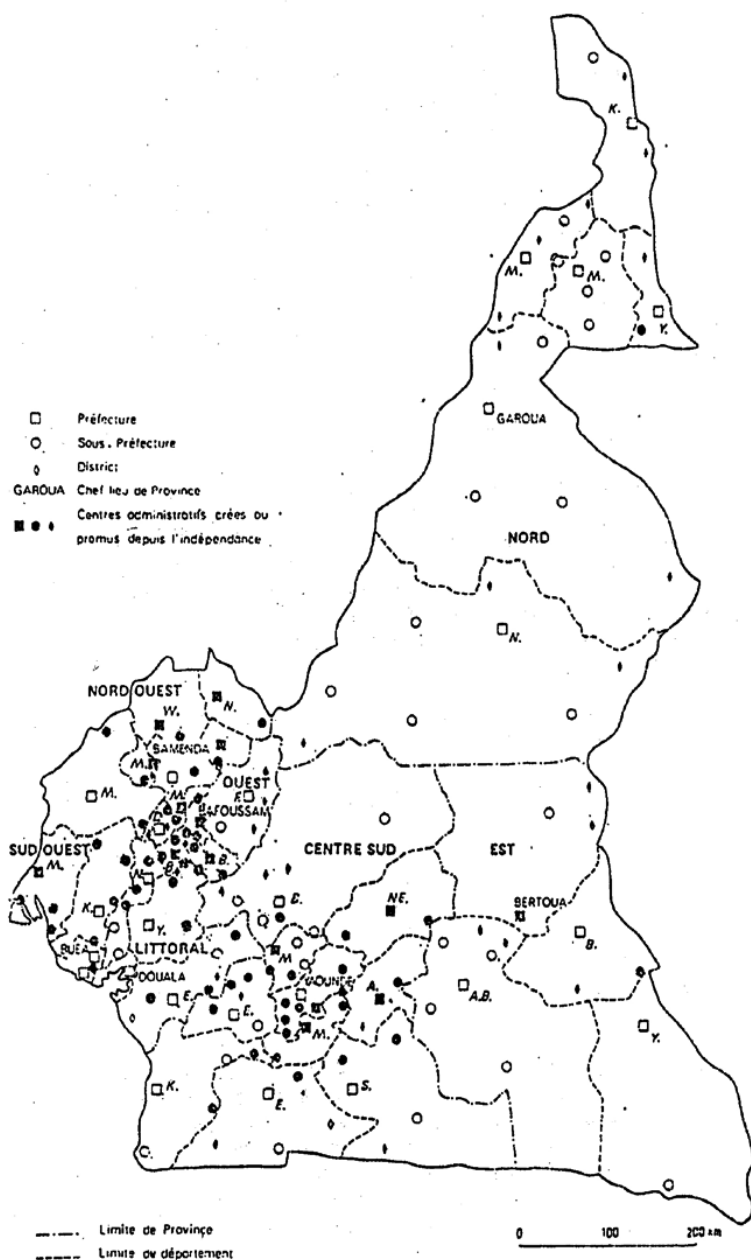


Fig . 7. Les divisions administratives du Cameroun en 1976



Intégration et Développement du Nord par un Certain Nombre D'équipements

Commençons par le domaine du développement rural qui, au Nord-Cameroun, est pris en charge sous forme de projets d'opérations intégrés, par des organismes para administratifs ou des sociétés de développement. Ces derniers sont au nombre de trois :

Le SEMNORD, la Mission d'Aménagement de la Vallée Supérieure de la Bénoué, la SODECOTON.

Le SEMNORD (Secteur Expérimental de Modernisation du Nord) est un héritage de la colonisation. Entre 1954 et 1974, il a encadré les actions de développement dont deux opérations principales.

- Des casiers de colonisation ont été créés pour faciliter la descente des montagnards depuis les secteurs surpeuplés des Monts Mandaras vers les plaines voisines aux densités humaines beaucoup plus faibles; les principaux casiers se situent près de Mora (Mokyo, Doulo-Gaze) et de Garoua (Sangnere).

- Le "Projet Guider" (1966-1973) a eu pour but le développement agricole de l'arrondissement de Guider (l'actuel département de Mayo-Louti) en améliorant les infrastructures socio-économiques et en favorisant l'installation de migrants. Son domaine d'intervention a été étendu à partir de 1970 au canton de Be (appartenant alors au département de la Bénoué).

La "Mission d'Aménagement de la vallée supérieure de la Bénoué", créée en 1974, a eu deux domaines principaux d'intervention:

- Tout d'abord, elle est chargée d'étudier les aménagements à réaliser dans la vallée de la Bénoué en aval du barrage de Lagdo pour profiter des possibilités nouvelles d'irrigation.

- En second lieu, elle est maître d'œuvre du "Projet Nord-Est Bénoué" qui a pour but de développer la région enclavée comprise entre la frontière tchadienne et les cours de la Bénoué et du Mayo-Kébi: modernisation de l'agriculture, création d'équipements sociaux, construction des routes, installation des migrants. Les deux premières phases du projet (1974-1978 et 1978-1982) ayant atteint leurs objectifs, pour la troisième phase (1982-1986) le périmètre a été étendu vers le Nord jusqu'à la route Garoua-Maroua et vers l'Ouest jusqu'à la route Garoua-N'Gaoundéré.

La SODECOTON (Société de Développement du Coton) a pris en 1974 la relève d'une structure coloniale, la C.F.D.T. (Compagnie Française de

Développement des Fibres Textiles) qui, depuis 1950, encadrait la culture du coton au Nord-Cameroun. Cette culture a connu sa principale phase de croissance entre 1951 et 1970 (augmentation régulière des surfaces cultivées, des rendements et de la production, l'actuelle province de l'Extrême-Nord dominant très largement avec 70 à 80 %). De 1970 à 1974, cette culture a connu la crise suite à la sécheresse et au découragement des planteurs. Avec la création de la SODECOTON en 1974, elle a connu un nouvel essor apparu d'abord dans l'actuelle province du Nord (adoption de méthodes intensives constituées notamment par l'utilisation des engrais, des insecticides et des herbicides) puis progressivement étendu à celle de l'Extrême-Nord. C'est désormais la province du Nord qui assure la majorité de la production (55 % en 1983-1984); elle détient une avance remarquable avec l'opération motorisation légère, qui y a été lancée en 1978, dans le cadre de l'opération Sud-Est Bénoué. En plus de l'encadrement de la culture du coton, la SODECOTON est maître d'œuvre de trois projets de développement.

- Le premier c'est le "Projet Sud-Est Bénoué", qui couvre la majeure partie du département de Mayo Rey.

- La première phase (1978-1982) a permis de développer la culture du coton en liaison avec une opération de motorisation légère, d'améliorer les infrastructures routières et de créer des équipements à caractère socio-économique, le tout accompagne d'une installation de migrants. La seconde phase devait poursuivre les mêmes actions.

- Le second, c'est le "Projet Centre-Nord" lancé en 1981 et dont le but était de favoriser le développement agricole des secteurs cotonniers de l'Extrême-Nord et de Mayo-Louti en les désenclavant et en améliorant les équipements socio-économiques.

- Le troisième c'est le "Projet Ouest-Bénoué", dont le démarrage était prévu pour 1983 et qui devait concerner la partie occidentale du département de la Bénoué et la majeure partie du département du Faro. Malheureusement, il n'a jamais été mis en exécution.

Le second domaine qui a eu un impact déterminant c'est celui des voies de communication et des transports. Dans ce domaine, le Nord-Cameroun avait d'énormes difficultés à surmonter :

- l'éloignement de la cote: voici les distances à partir de Douala :

	Distance en droite (km)	Distance par route , (km)
N’Gaoundéré	560.	945
Garoua	710	1220
Maroua	880	1430
Kousseri	1060	, 1690

- Les obstacles naturels: les hautes terres de l’Adamaoua gênent les communications Nord-Sud; le gonflement des cours d’eaux et l’inondation des plaines du Logone interrompent les liaisons en saison des pluies, le seul cours d’eau navigable jusqu’à la cote, la Bénoué (prolonge par le Niger) n’est navigable que 2 mois en moyenne par an (fin juillet - début octobre), et coule en majeure partie en territoire étranger (Nigeria); le retard des équipèrent le port de Garoua n’a été modernise qu’en 1947, Garoua n’est relie a la cote camerounaise par une route permanente qu’en 1929, Maroua seulement en 1952, Kousseri en 1971, les aérodromes ne se sont créés qu’en 1950 (Garoua et N’Gaoundéré) et 1955 (Maroua).

Depuis 1965, un effort très important pour le désenclavement de la région a été entrepris entre 1969 et 1974 (fig. 8): construction du chemin de fer “transcamerounais” Yaoundé-Belabo et N’Gaoundéré qui compte quatre gares sur le territoire de la région (Ngaoundal, Makor, Bawa et N’Gaoundéré), bitumage de 1150 km de routes (L’axe sudnord N’Gaoundéré-Garoua-Maroua-Mora-Matam, 720 km ; la route Meidougou-Ngaoundal Tibati, 250 km ; tronçon de la “transafricaine” Lagos-Mombassa), construction des routes permanentes dans le cadre des .différents projets de développement intégré, bitumage des pistes des aéroports de N’Gaoundéré et de Maroua en 1971.

La mise en place de ce réseau dont l’épine dorsale est constituée par le chemin de fer “transcamerounais” relaye par la route bitumée N’Gaoundéré-Kousseri, a désenclave et structure le Nord-Cameroun. Le Nord a aussi reçu, dans le cadre de l’équilibre régional, un certain nombre d’équipements ayant un rôle structurant ou développant. Il s’agit de l’usine CIMENCAM de Figuil, mise en service en 1971, qui est l’homologue de celle de Douala pour le Sud ; de l’usine “Brasserie du Cameroun” de Garoua créée en 1967 pour ravitailler le Nord ; l’usine “CICAM” (cotonnière Industrielle du Cameroun),

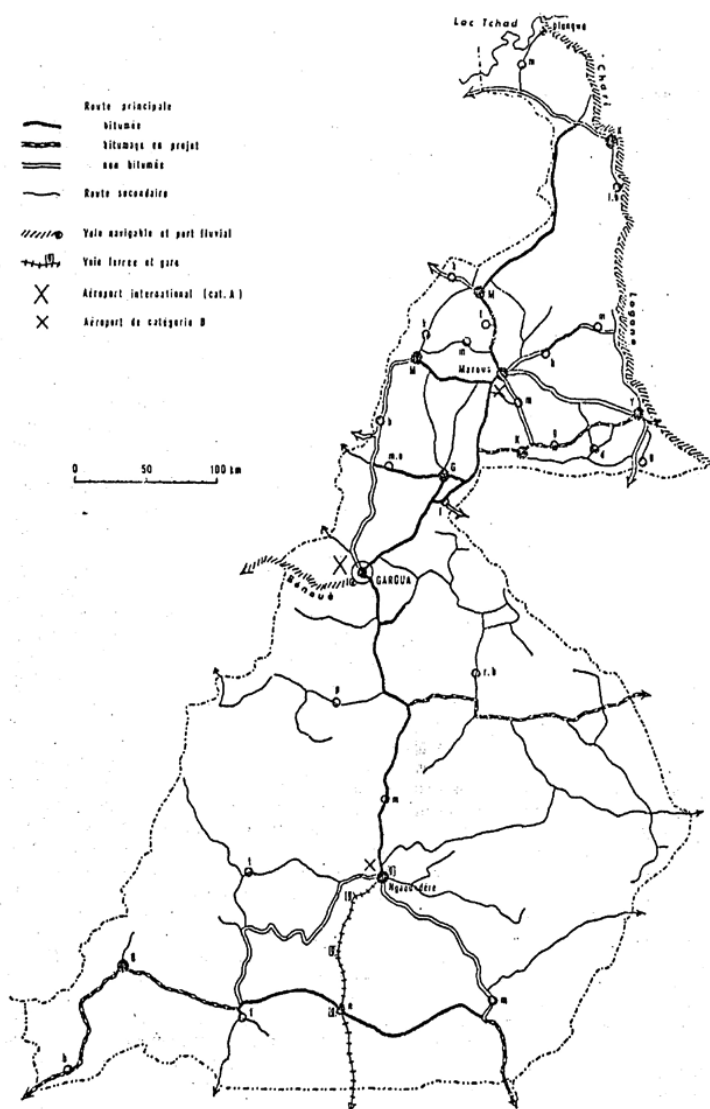
mise en service a Garoua en 1966 (Garoua I) puis doublée en 1972 (Garoua II) pour la filature, le tissage du coton, et qui fait contrepoids a l'usine "CICAM de Douala; l'usine STPC (Société de Tanneries et Peausseries du Cameroun créée en 1974 a N'Gaoundéré ; la conserverie SOCAMCO de Maroua-Salak (1966-1976) ; la SODEBLE (Société de Développement de la culture du Blé), créée en 19758 Wassande (a 80 km au sud de N'Gaoundéré) et la SEMRY (Société d'Expansion et de Modernisation de la Riziculture de Yagoua) créée en 1971 grâce au pompage électrique des eaux du Logone, puis étendu en 1978 a Maga grâce 8 la construction d'un barrage-réservoir sur le Logone, et enfin étendu a Kousseri en 1980: ces deux sociétés sont reçues par le Nord dans le cadre de la répartition des complexes agro-industriels entre les régions; le barrage sur la Bénoué, a Lagdo pour la production de l'électricité et la pêche, a quoi il est prévu d'ajouter l'irrigation pour la création d'un complexe agro-industriel; l'érection de l'aéroport de Garoua en aéroport international, le 2e du pays après Douala. Tous ces équipements ont concouru à l'intégration de l'espace régional.

Enfin, la ville de Garoua est maintenue et consolidée dans son rôle de capitale de cette région. Elle tend même à fonctionner comme la seconde capitale du Cameroun après Yaoundé, le Chef de l'Etat ayant pris l'habitude de s'y retirer pour les grandes fêtes musulmanes a l'occasion desquelles les grands corps de l'Etat et les dignitaires locaux venaient de tous les coins du pays pour lui présenter leurs vœux; il avait pris aussi l'habitude d'y recevoir certaines visites de Chefs d'Etat étrangers. Des bruits avalent même couru au moment de la construction de l'Aéroport international de Garoua, que le Chef de l'Etat avait le projet secret de transférer dans cette ville, lorsque son équipement serait complet, la capitale du pays à la place de Yaoundé.

Ce qui est sur, c'est que le Président AHIDJO a équipé le Nord plus que tout autre région du pays, l'intention avouée étant de lui faire rattraper son retard sur le Sud, et de l'intégrer au reste du territoire national, ce qui contribuait a éloigner définitivement la menace de sécession brandie au moment de l'Indépendance. Cela a permis à la région de consolider son unité et son identité. IL est difficile de croire que l'action régionalisant du Président AHIDJO n'a pas été essentiellement inspirée par son appartenance à l'aristocratie Peul. Cette action peut être interprétée comme le prolongement de la main mise des Peul sur le Nord-Cameroun au XIXe siècle, a la faveur de la guerre sainte déclenchée par Ousman dan Fodio a partir de Yola. La régionalisation du Nord-Cameroun est accompagnée sur le plan culturel par

son islamisation, plus précisément par sa “foulbeisation” (inculcation de la civilisation Foulbé aux autres) et sur le plan politique par l’hégémonie de l’aristocratie Foulbé (qui détient l’essentiel des postes que la politique d’équilibre régionale donne au Nord sur la base du poids de toute la population). Il existe, en outre, à l’intérieur de l’aristocratie Peul une certaine discrimination interne qui privilégie les gens de Garoua par rapport aux autres. Ce sont cette prééminence des Foulbé de Garoua sur le reste de l’aristocratie Peul, et cette hégémonie des Peul sur les autres ethnies qui sont

Fig.8.- Situation des infrastructures des transports en 1974 au Nord-Cameroun



à la base d'un certain rejet de la régionalisation du Président AHIDJO par une bonne partie de la population concernée. Le Président a essayé de désamorcer ce mécontentement de certaines forces vives locales en procédant à la création de quelques nouveaux départements (fig. 9) : Mbam

et Derme (chef-lieu Banyo) par amputation de l'Adamaoua, Mayo-Sava (chef-lieu Mora) et Mayo Tsanaga (chef lieu Mokolo) issus de la division en deux du Margui Wandala, Kaele (chef-lieu Kaele) par amputation du piamare, Mayo Louti (chef-lieu Guider) par amputation de la Bénoué.

Sous Le Régime Actuel Du Président, Paul Biya

Le découpage du Nord en trois entités régionales

Le remplacement à la tête de l'Etat le 6 novembre 1982 du Président AHIDJO par le Président BIYA, un ressortissant du Sud-Cameroun, a eu des conséquences importantes sur la régionalisation du Nord-Cameroun. En effet, celle-ci cesse d'être une région à part, une région privilégiée pour devenir désormais une région comme les autres, une région ordinaire. Il y était devenu possible pour les forces vives locales autres que l'aristocratie Peul de faire entendre leurs aspirations en matière de régionalisation. C'est partiellement pour leur donner satisfaction que le gouvernement a procédé en août 1983 à un redécoupage administratif du Nord, avec notamment la création de trois provinces (fig. n° 10) :

_ L'Adamaoua, correspondant à l'ancien département du même nom avant son amputation pour la création du Mbam et Derme (chef-lieu N'Gaoundéré) ;

_ Le Nord, correspondant à l'ancien département de la Bénoué (chef-lieu Garoua) ; _ l'Extrême-Nord, correspondant au reste du territoire (chef-lieu Maroua).

Si cette dernière province n'a subi aucun changement au niveau des départements, les départements qui constituent chacune des deux autres sont tous nouvellement créés, par promotion de certains anciens arrondissements, un processus déjà utilisé. La figure n° 10 donne le résultat de cette opération. Dans chacun des deux nouveaux chefs-lieux de provinces de Maroua et N'Gaoundéré, ont été implantées des services à vocation de coordination, semblables à ceux qui existaient à Garoua. Cette nouvelle régionalisation a été bien accueillie par la majorité des forces vives locales, qui la ressentent comme une libération, comme une émancipation. Tout en l'appréciant hautement, beaucoup demandent que le gouvernement aille plus loin.

La demande de nouvelles actions régionalisante

Les forces vives locales demandent que le gouvernement reprenne la création des infrastructures et des équipements qui semblent avoir pris fin avec le départ du Président AHIDJO. Dans ce domaine, la création en 1992 de l'Université de NGAOUNDERE, destinée à desservir prioritairement le Nord-Cameroun, est ressentie comme un bon point, à condition qu'on donne à cette institution les moyens de se construire et fonctionner pour remplir sa mission.

Les forces vives de certaines ethnies, naguère brimées, demandent la création de nouvelles provinces. Parmi ces demande a celles des G'baya méritent une attention particulière parce que sa satisfaction entrainerait l'amputation de la province de l'Adamaoua (département du Mbere) et celle de la province de l'Est (partie Nord du département du Lom-et-Derme). Dans un mouvement dit de la Kirditude, les forces vives des populations autres que les Foulbé, prenant conscience de leur caractère majoritaire (60 %), demandent à jouer à l'échelle nationale, un rôle conforme à leur poids numérique, voire à être considéré dans les alliances politiques comme une alternative aux Foulbé. Parallèlement, les aristocraties Peul de Maroua et de N'Gaoundéré rivalisent pour prendre dans les mêmes alliances politiques nationales la place qu'occupaient naguère les Foulbé de Garoua. Bref, à l'immobilisme d'antan impose par l'hégémonie Peul a succède depuis 1982 une recomposition régionale qui n'est pas encore terminée,

Conclusion

En guise de conclusion à cette étude, nous voudrions remettre un certain nombre d'idées qui, sans constituer formellement notre contribution au débat qui est en cours actuellement au Cameroun en vue d'une révision de la Constitution comportant une décentralisation, pourraient néanmoins alimenter la réflexion.

Pour commencer, reconnaissons que l'unification régionalisante du Nord-Cameroun a été à l'origine une initiative du pouvoir colonial à la recherche d'un prétexte pour justifier son maintien face à la revendication de l'Indépendance, avant d'être prise en charge, assumée par les élites de cette région qui y ont trouvé leur intérêt. Le pouvoir colonial a inventé, comme on peut le voir dans les archives, un "problème musulman" ou "question

musulmane”, présentant un Nord-Cameroun musulman qu’il fallait gérer distinctement d’un Sud-Cameroun chrétien, d’un Nord-Cameroun traditionnel et démuné qu’il fallait protéger contre le risque de domination par le Sud-Cameroun modernisé et presque déjà développé. Une telle sollicitude à tout naturellement fait naître chez les élites du Nord un vif sentiment pro-français et une vive méfiance envers les Camerounais du Sud, au point qu’aujourd’hui encore, certains retardataires de cette région préfèrent avoir affaire à l’assistant technique de la coopération française plutôt qu’à un Camerounais du Sud d’égale compétence.

De même que le pouvoir colonial a inventé un “problème musulman” pour particulariser le Nord et justifier son maintien, les forces néocoloniales ont inventé un “problème bamiléké” dans le but d’écarter les Bamiléké de la gestion du pays, elles ont identifié un “péril bamiléké” constitué par une menace de domination des Bamiléké sur le reste des Camerounais. Ce qui revenait inciter les autres Camerounais à se méfier des Bamiléké et à les exclure de la gestion du pays. Enfin, le même processus est aujourd’hui en train de créer un “problème Anglophone” avec des intentions opposées car, pour les uns il s’agit d’un prétexte pour obtenir des privilèges, tandis que pour les autres, il s’agit d’un prétexte pour exclure les concurrents. L’évocation de ces différents “problèmes” (on devrait dire de ces faux problèmes) vise à mettre en garde contre leur utilisation comme centre pour une régionalisation du Cameroun.

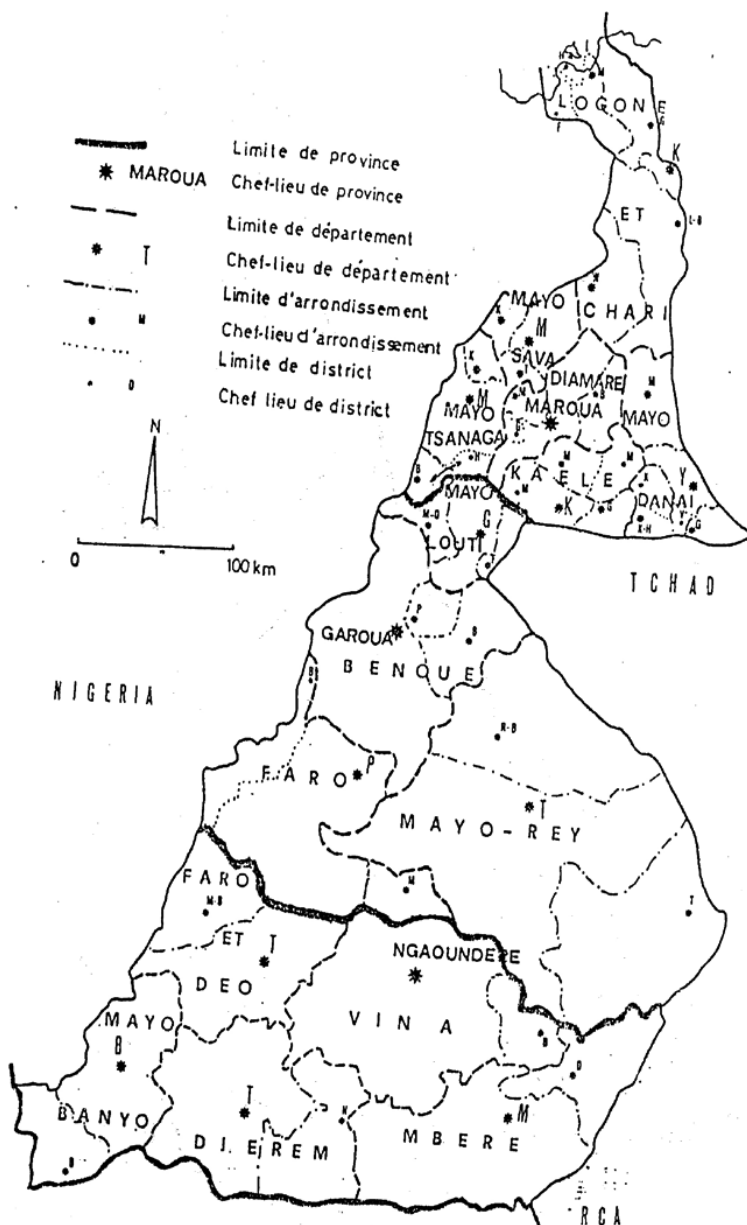
L’ethnicité a joué dès l’époque coloniale un rôle très grand dans le découpage administratif du Cameroun. Elle a même servi à baptiser certaines unités administratives: département Bamiléké aujourd’hui disparu, département Bamoum rebaptisé récemment département du Noun, district des Mbos devenu district de Santchou. Elle n’est cependant pas un bon critère de régionalisation, parce que son utilisation conduirait à un émiettement illimité du territoire national pour satisfaire tout le monde. Elle sert encore à dénommer des régions : pays Massa, pays Toupouri, Plaine Tikar, pays Bassa, pays Bamiléké, pays Boulou. Dans un monde où les migrations opèrent continuellement une redistribution spatiale et un brassage des populations, il devient illusion d’attacher le nom d’une ethnie à un territoire. Parce que l’ethnicité comporte une connotation d’exclusion, il est dangereux de lui accorder un poids trop grand comme facteur de régionalisation.

L'ethnicité engendre les concepts d'autochtones et d'allogènes qui font oublier que tout autochtone d'aujourd'hui est un allogène d'hier, implante il y a plus ou moins longtemps. Pourquoi certains autochtones veulent-ils que l'histoire des migrations s'arrête avec leur installation ?

Autre erreur à corriger: l'habitude de voir promouvoir à un rang supérieur les unités administratives, qui venait de ce que le maillage administratif était trop lâche au départ, nous a fait acquérir une conception biologique des unités administratives. Pour beaucoup de Camerounais, l'arrondissement d'aujourd'hui, puisqu'il était hier canton, doit devenir demain un département et après demain une province. Les principales doléances que l'on adresse au Premier Ministre ou au Président de la République entourée à l'intérieur du pays concernant la création de nouvelles unités administratives et la nomination des fils du terroir à des postes élèves de responsabilité, c'est-à-dire au gouvernement.

Pour finir, nous rappelons qu'il n'existe pas de régionalisation neutre. Toute régionalisation vise un but, une fonction et doit y être adaptée. Depuis la colonisation, le découpage territorial au Cameroun vise la gestion des hommes, d'où l'utilité de coller aux organisations existantes que sont souvent les ethnies et parfois les chefferies ou les lamidats. Les départements, les provinces ont été conçus pour administrer les hommes. A cet effet, le slogan "rapprocher l'administration des administrés" est éloquent. La régionalisation que nous voulons faire aujourd'hui vise la décentralisation de l'Etat pour le développement. Il faut donc créer des unités qui, par leur poids démographique, leur poids en ressources, leur taille spatiale, seraient capables de remplir les fonctions, d'assumer les charges que la décentralisation veut leur confier. Tant que ces fonctions, ces charges, ne sont pas arrêtées par les politiques, le "technicien" de l'espace que je suis en ma qualité de géographe ne peut avancer aucun découpage concret. Mais il est possible d'affirmer qu'un tel espace, vu la taille attendue, sera nécessairement polyethnique, sa structure ethnique étant d'ailleurs dynamique et non figée. Il serait clairvoyant que la détermination de sa dimension prenne en compte ce qui existe ou se prépare sur ce plan dans les pays voisins, dans la perspective d'une intégration future. Bref, la région recherchée devra être sur le plan politique capable de générer des contrepoids au pouvoir central, sur le plan économique et social capable de soutenir un développement durable.

Fig.10. Carte administrative du Nord-Cameroun en 1983



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Relations Interethniques, Problématique De L'intégration Nationale Et De La Sécurité Aux Abords Sud Du Lac Tchad

Thierno Bah et Saibou Issa

La partie extrême nord du Cameroun, sous forme de “bec de canard”, s'enfonce dans le lac Tchad. La elle a des frontières communes avec les deux Etats voisins du Tchad et du Nigeria. Le “lac Tchad et ses abords sud constituent une zone marquée par une grande historicité. Nombreux sont les peuples du Cameroun, du Nord, du Sud comme de l'Ouest qui s'y réfèrent comme étape décisive de leur processus migratoire multiséculaire. Le lac Tchad et ses abords ont été par ailleurs le centre de gravité du puissant Empire du Bomou qui, jusqu'au XV^eLe siècle, a établi son hégémonie sur une grande partie du Soudan central. C'est également vers le lac Tchad que convergeaient les colonnes expéditionnaires européennes, dans leur souci de disséquer le continent africain et de se le partager. Il y a la toute une épaisseur historique sur laquelle nous n'allons pas nous étendre, mais qui reste prégnante pour l'analyse des problèmes d'aujourd'hui.

Ce qui nous préoccupe dans cette étude, ce sont les relations interethniques, la Problématique de l'intégration nationale et de la Sécurité aux abords sud du lac Tchad, singulièrement sur cette portion territoriale du Cameroun qui constitue actuellement le département du Lagon et Chari, dans la province de l'Extrême Nord. Région périphérique par excellence dans la configuration du Cameroun, le Lagon et Chari nous a paru un champ d'étude privilégié pour l'analyse d'un certain nombre de phénomènes évoqués dans l'argumentaire de ce colloque: - relations centre/périphérie, marginalité, régionalisme, intégration et/ou repli identitaire, territorialité et relations transfrontalières, impact des enjeux politiques “nationaux” de l'Etat sur la gestion de l'ethnicité, etc.

L'intégration nationale restera une illusion tant qu'elle sera pensée et orchestrée par le haut. Une condition à cette intégration est la promotion à la base de rapports harmonieux entre les différents groupes ethniques. Or depuis quelques années, l'Afrique noire en général et le Cameroun en particulier sont secoués par des conflits communautaires qui, à terme,

risquent de compromettre les fragiles équilibres encore maintenus au niveau régional et national.

Le Lagon et Chari nous offre un exemple éloquent qui mérite d'être étudié, pour en tirer des leçons. C'est en Janvier 1992 que la ville de Kousséri, chef-lieu du département du Logone et Chari fut le théâtre de conflits sanglants entre les deux principales composantes de la région: les Arabes Choa et les Kotoko. Les analystes ont avancé différentes causes à ce drame: volonté d'affranchissement des Arabes de ce qu'ils considèrent comme une tutelle pesante des Kotoko, percée de l'intégrisme, manipulations politiques et lutte pour le leadership, etc. ... Ce qui est certain, c'est que la situation est préoccupante car, à travers les pamphlets rédigés par les élites des deux communautés, se dégagent des sentiments de rejet, de hargne et de méfiance. C'est ainsi que sur la base d'un contentieux historique larvé, les deux groupes, bien qu'appartenant toutes à *l'umma*, se sont livrés à des affrontements sanglants, au moment même où le vent du multipartisme souffle sur le Cameroun.

Il n'est pas dans notre intention d'examiner ici tous les aspects de cet épineux problème. Nous voudrions cependant combler une lacune en sondant la dimension historique. Cela permettra de cerner les fondements du conflit, d'en ressortir les enjeux et d'évaluer l'impact sur les processus d'intégration. Pour ce faire, nous nous interrogerons sur la gestion de l'ethnicité par les différents États et régimes politiques qui ont dominé la région. L'ethnogenèse des Kotoko est en rapport direct avec l'hégémonie du Bomou qui s'établit dès le 15^e siècle, et surtout à la suite des campagnes militaires conduites par Idriss Alaoma au 16^e Siècle. Les expéditions contre les peuples vivant dans les abords sud du Lac Tchad, notamment les Sao, vont conduire à des phénomènes intenses de migrations, de percolation et de brassage de populations. L'insécurité généralisée va donner naissance à un habitat défensif, sous forme d'enceintes entourant des cités érigées sur des buttes. Ainsi les Kotoko, descendants présumés des Sao, investissent le territoire qui est aujourd'hui le leur et clament leur autonomie. Ils resteront jusqu'au début du 18^e Siècle tributaires du Bomou, bénéficiant cependant d'une relative autonomie dans la gestion des affaires locales.

C'est par vagues successives et par petits groupes claniques que les Arabes, venus de la vallée du Nil à travers le couloir du Darfour-Kordofan, s'implantèrent aux abords sud du lac Tchad. Le phénomène sporadique au départ, prit de l'ampleur dans la deuxième moitié du 19^e siècle. C'est pour le

vieil Empire du Bomou une période de décadence, que le conquérant El Amin el Kanemi met à profit pour instaurer la dynastie des Shehou. Les Arabes Choa déferlent alors sur le pays Kotoko et font allégeance à El Kanemi. Celui-ci associe les plus influents d'entre eux à la gestion de l'Etat, et l'élément arabe joue un rôle déterminant dans le jeu d'alliances et de conflits auquel se livrent les Etats de la région, tels le Bomou en déclin, le Ouaddai et plus tard la Baguirmi.

Dans le nouvel Empire du Kanem, le chef de la communauté arabe (*Tsima Teyrab*) occupe une place privilégiée dans l'appareil de l'Etat et apparaît comme une sorte de proconsul dont le rôle est de garantir le soutien de sa communauté à l'autorité centrale. C'est par l'intermédiaire du *Tsima Teyrab* que les Arabes manifestent leur adhésion à l'hégémonie imposée par Fès Kanouri, et s'impliquent dans la gestion et la défense du pays. Lorsqu'en mai 1893, Rabah conquiert Kukawa, capitale du Bomou et établit son Quartier General à Dikwa, ressemble des tribus arabes font allégeance au nouveau souverain qu'elles considèrent comme un des leurs, de par sa culture arabe. Dans les réformes sociopolitiques qu'il inaugure, Rabah va instrumentaliser à souhait la politique de la préférence ethnique. Il instaure une administration où les chefs des tribus arabes détiennent un pouvoir énorme et l'ensemble de leur communauté put bénéficier de la prospérité nouvelle.

Il est donc évident que, pendant toute cette période précoloniale, la gestion de l'ethnicité aux bords sud du lac Tchad s'est située dans une logique préférentielle et de manipulation au profit de l'autorité centrale. Cela aura compliqué à souhait la cohabitation, dans un même espace territorial, de deux communautés présentant bien des affinités, en particulier leur commune appartenance à *l'umma*.

Face à l'impérialisme français, Rabah oppose une farouche résistance. Sa défaite en 1900 permet à la France de prendre possession de son territoire et d'instrumentaliser autrement les rapports interethniques dans la région du Lagon et Chari. Dans son aventure coloniale, la France a manifesté essentiellement une politique de défiance vis-à-vis de l'arabisme et de l'islamisme, en dépit de quelques compromis à caractère contingent. Dans le Lagon et Chari, leur préférence ethnique se portera donc sur les Kotoko. Pour saper les bases de l'Etat fondé par Rabah, ils créent dans la région une vaste entité politique, le sultanat de Goulfeï qui regroupe la plupart des principautés Kotoko et la quasi-totalité des tribus arabes. A sa tête, ils

placèrent Jagara, leur allie contre Rabah, qui se révéla un potentat brutal qui n'hésitait pas à malmenier ses sujets en particulier les Arabes.

Dans toute l'Afrique noire, l'ère coloniale fut marquée fondamentalement par l'arbitraire, les exactions, la politique du diviser pour mieux régner. L'intégration n'avait de sens que dans la mesure où elle drainait vers les nouveaux centres urbains de la cote, les ressources extorquées, destinées à la métropole. Ainsi pendant les six décennies que dura la colonisation, le Lagon et Chari fut cantonné dans la marginalité, et les différents administrateurs coloniaux attisèrent les conflits intercommunautaires. Les arabes notamment furent victimes d'injustices et d'humiliations; ils se constituèrent de plus en plus en un groupe marginal, figé, autarcique, refusant l'école moderne. Le démembrement du vaste Sultanat de Goulfeï en cinq petits Sultanats (Goulfeï, Bodo, Woulki, Makari et Afade) disloqua l'intégration minimale qui s'était opérée dans la région, démantela l'autorité des *Lawan* (chefs de terre) et resserra encore davantage l'étau de la colonisation sur les tribus arabes.

Partout en Afrique, au lendemain des indépendances, l'Etat s'est d'emblée engagé dans un processus unificateur et centralisateur, et dans une logique de développement planifié intégrant autoritairement l'ensemble du territoire national. Une telle mystique, aujourd'hui devenue mythe, a également animé le Cameroun. Il nous semble pertinent, au niveau du Lagon et Chari, de tenter une lecture de la gestion de l'ethnicité par les autorités politiques centrales. Au lendemain de l'indépendance, le régime instaure par Ahmadou Ahidjo prône l'intégration nationale et pour y parvenir, développe le concept d'équilibre régional; mais cela n'empêchera nullement Ahidjo, homme de grande habileté politique, de placer l'ethnicité au cœur des stratégies d'alliances. Dans le Logone et Chari, on observe une sorte de continuité par rapport à la période coloniale. Par réalisme sans doute, Ahidjo se rapproche du groupe Kotoko qui, bien que numériquement moins que les Arabes, offre l'avantage d'une structure sociopolitique traditionnelle structurée et hiérarchisée, ainsi, qu'une élite formée à l'occidentale, susceptible de se positionner stratégiquement, dans l'appareil étatique moderne. Au sein de l'ethnie Kotoko, Ahidjo trouva en Ousman Mey, ancien élève de l'école primaire supérieure de Bongor au Tchad, un collaborateur zélé et fidèle en même temps qu'un compagnon. Pendant près de deux décennies, il aura été inspecteur fédéral, puis gouverneur inamovible de l'ancienne province du Nord où il agissait en véritable proconsul. Historiquement et politiquement, le choix d'Ousman Mey comme l'un des

piliers du régime revêt une triple signification: dans un premier temps, il traduit tout un art politique, fait d'équilibrisme, par lequel Ahidjo s'imposait d'associer à son pouvoir des personnalités de diverses origines ethniques et régionales. Véritables seigneurs dans un système d'allégeance, elles avalent à charge la mobilisation politique intense et la fidélisation de leurs communautés respectives au régime en place.

En plus, le choix d'Ousman Mey, membre de l'aristocratie musulmane mais non peul, précède d'une certaine prudence politique. En effet, Ahidjo était instruit du fait que l'histoire de ses congénères peul est riche en intrigues politiques, et qu'il pouvait être périlleux de placer à la tête de la plus grande province du pays un homme qui pouvait, à la longue, consolider son pouvoir et échapper au contrôle du président. Historiquement, les rapports entre le groupe peul hégémonique et les Kotoko, d'islamisation ancienne mais constituant une minorité, ont toujours été distants. Le choix d'Ousman Mey, globalement ne pouvait faire l'objet d'aucun contentieux. Ce qui lui permit de demeurer deux décennies durant le patron et une sorte de symbole de cette unité factice de la vaste province du Nord qui, en vérité était marquée de contradictions multiples. Le positionnement d'Ousman Mey dans les hautes sphères de l'Etat, la quasi-intimité qui régnait entre lui et Ahidjo ont eu, au niveau local, un impact que d'aucuns ont jugé préjudiciable dans les relations interethniques entre Kotoko et Arabes Choa. Ces derniers l'ont accusé de pratiques partisans dans la promotion politique, administrative, et dans l'allocation des ressources qui bénéficièrent presque exclusivement aux Kotoko. Il est ainsi établi qu'à la tête des deux arrondissements qui composaient le Logone et Chari, deux Kotoko étaient nommés sous-préfets-administrateurs municipaux. A l'Assemblée Nationale, les députés représentant la région étaient en majorité Kotoko. Il en était de même pour les responsables locaux de l'UNC (Union Nationale Camerounaise), parti au pouvoir.

Quel fut le rôle réel d'Ousa Mey dans la mise, en place d'un tel dispositif? Il est difficile de répondre de façon péremptoire, en l'absence d'études plus fouillées et objectives. La réalité est cependant là qui montre à quel degré les Arabes se sentirent exclus. Ils manifestèrent dès lors des sentiments de repli identitaire et de contestation de l'ordre établi. Des conflits sanglants éclatèrent dans le Logone-Chari, et les Arabes furent l'objet d'une violente répression de la part des Forces Armées qui massacrèrent, en 1979, la quasi-totalité des habitants du village de Dolle. Une des leçons que l'on peut

tirer de ce drame c'est que la politique de l'intégration nationale, la stratégie de l'équilibre régional prônées et conduites dans un contexte monopartite, autoritaire et clientéliste apparaît en définitive largement mythiques. Au Cameroun comme dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique noire, une saine gestion de l'ethnicité n'a pas eu lieu, faute d'avoir pris en compte les véritables intérêts des communautés locales, en privilégiant les solidarités et les complémentarités. Bien au contraire, les antagonismes ont été instrumentalisés par des intermédiaires se définissant comme, élites, dans leurs ambitions pour se positionner dans les hautes sphères de l'Etat-Nation.

Les espoirs, nés du processus de démocratisation enclenché depuis 1990 se sont également évanouis. La démission de Ahidjo en 1982 et l'avènement de Paul Biya ont déterminé des mutations profondes au niveau de, la superstructure, dont l'impact sur les différentes composantes de la société camerounaise, jusqu'au niveau local est évident, une donnée nouvelle fondamentale, au niveau de l'articulation administrative du territoire et des rapports entre le centre et la périphérie fut le démembrement de l'immense province du Nord, qui fut scindée en trois nouvelles provinces. Les abords sud du Tchad furent intégrés dans la province de l'Extrême-Nord. Le tout puissant gouverneur Ousman Mey fut écarté du cercle dirigeant. Dans cette nouvelle configuration, le Logone et Chari va être soumis à un retournement dans la gestion de l'ethnicité, surtout avec l'avènement, à partir de 1990, du multipartisme. Les élites Arabes et Kotoko, par rapport aux nouveaux enjeux politiques vont tenter de trouver une nouvelle rationalité, de définir des objectifs et d'apprécier l'ensemble des ressources leur permettant de bénéficier avantageusement de la rente politique, et de se positionner stratégiquement, au niveau local et national, dans le système mis en place par Biya. Le nouveau régime, en dépit d'une rhétorique prônant l'unité, la justice et la paix, sera enclin, dans sa stratégie de dislocation de l'ancien "bloc au pouvoir" et de consolidation de ses bases, d'instrumentaliser les antagonismes historiques entre Arabes Choa et Kotoko.

Les revendications des Arabes vont trouver, dans le multipartisme, une opportunité pour s'exprimer. Leur poids démographique dans le Logone et Chari, plus de la moitié de la population du département va déterminer une alliance objective avec le régime de Biya soucieux de trouver une certaine légitimité à travers les suffrages. C'est ce qui explique ici la victoire du RDPC, parti au pouvoir, aux élections législatives et présidentielle de 1992. Il n'est pas étonnant que l'UNDP, parti d'opposition sensé incarner une certaine

continuité avec le régime d'Ahidjo, trouve l'essentiel de son électorat chez les Kotoko. Il y a théoriquement une dichotomie qui fait se chevaucher appartenance ethnique et obédience politique dans le contexte du multipartisme naissant. De part et d'autre, des intermédiaires ethniques, sorte de "seigneurs" de leur groupe, servent de courroies de transmission pour répercuter des doléances au niveau central, ou conforter les alliances établies.

Au sein de la communauté arabe, le Docteur Kamsouloum Abbakabir, propriétaire d'une pharmacie à Kousséri, a su imposer son leadership et a été coopté comme membre du Comité Central du RDPC; il est le représentant typique du segment moderne de l'élite arabe qui, longtemps, bouda l'école occidentale. Si l'activité principale des Arabes est l'élevage, leur société a connu surtout depuis les années 1970, des mutations sociales et économiques, avec l'émergence d'une bourgeoisie marchande très active. Celle-ci a su tirer parti de l'environnement régional, de la proximité et de la porosité des frontières pour se lancer dans un négoce lucratif avec le Tchad ou les multiples conflits ont créé la pénurie, et avec le Nigeria où la spéculation sur le cours du Naira (monnaie nigériane) a créé des fortunes rapides. Une bourgeoisie d'affaires est née qui veut tirer profit, au plan national, des alliances politiques. Un exemple éloquent est celui d'El Hadj Emma Abdoukarim, riche commerçant qui s'est imposé en leader patriarcal et financier de l'activisme des Arabes.

Les Kotoko, quant à eux, ont vu émerger une série de leaders qui, en fonction de leurs positions, drainent leur communauté essentiellement vers l'UNDP. Ousmane Ahmed, fils d'Ahmed Kotoko, ancien président de l'Assemblée Nationale du Tchad revenu au Cameroun, bénéficie d'une autorité locale incontestable. Le pluralisme politique et l'amorce du processus de démocratisation auraient pu déboucher sur une gestion heureuse de l'ethnicité. Malheureusement, la recomposition politique opérée par le nouveau régime n'a pas mis un terme à l'instrumentalisation astucieuse des clivages à des fins d'alliance politique. Au niveau du Logone et Chari, la plupart des entrepreneurs politiques se sont mis à développer une rhétorique à travers laquelle ils défendent les intérêts restreints de leur groupe, tout en s'assurant pour eux-mêmes une rampe de lancement vers les hautes sphères de l'Etat. Plus grave, la violence collective dans le processus politique est apparue, en lieu et place de l'urne, comme un moyen privilégié de pénétrer dans le système politique.

Cette politisation partisane paroxysmique de l'ethnie a plonge le Logone et Chari dans un cycle infernal de violence, de haine et de peur. Les massacres mutuels perpétués à Kousséri en Janvier 1992 ont pour longtemps hypothéqué la paix dans la région et invitent à une remise en cause de tout le système global de gestion des communautés locales, sans quoi toute intégration au niveau national restera mythique.

Outre les relations interethniques, le Logone et Chari pose le problème de l'intégration par rapport aux différents pòles d'attraction. Nous examinerons ce problème dans sa dimension historique, pour mieux en tirer des leçons. Pour ce faire, un préalable épistémologique, sur lequel nous ne pouvons nous étendre, impose de déterminer les contours et le contenu de la nation, ainsi que la nature de l'Etat en Afrique. Une question incontournable est de savoir s'il y a aujourd'hui en Afrique des nations véritables, au regard des divers facteurs qui contribuent à leur construction: territoire, langue, unité économique, unité culturelle et psychique fondée sur une commune histoire et une commune volonté pour toutes les composantes, de vivre ensemble. Le concept d'Etat quant à lui, peut se comprendre par rapport aux différentes stratégies permettant, à partir d'un centre ou pòle, d'imposer une hégémonie, de déterminer et de consolider un lieu géométrique ou s'élabore un projet politique, économique et social, s'imposant à un espace territorial déterminé, ou s'exerce une souveraineté.

Les grandes hégémonies du Soudan occidental et central, qui ont évolué entre le 16^e et le 18^e siècle ont été dotées d'un appareil étatique solide et ont constitué des nations en formation. Il en a été ainsi du Bomou qui a établi sa souveraineté dans toute la région des abords sud du lac Tchad. Le territoire actuel du Logone et Chari dépendant donc de Bimi Ngazargamou, la capitale impériale. La région fut érigée, au lendemain des campagnes militaires d'Idriss Alama au 16^e siècle, en "province bomouane du Kotoko"; un gouverneur fut nommé, pour faire respecter et exécuter les directives de l'autorité centrale. Cette centralisation, loin d'être excessive, aménageait des structures de gestion régionale et locale d'une grande flexibilité, qui ont sans doute assuré au Bomou cohésion relative et longévité, limitant au maximum des conflits entre le centre et les périphéries. À la tête de l'Etat, se trouve le Mai, "chef suprême, propriétaire et défenseur des terres de l'Empire". La structure de gouvernement, très hiérarchisée, est caractérisée de chefs de terres (*cima cidibe*) et de chefs de tribus (*cima jilibé*) qui administrent des domaines bien délimités. Ces chefs sont nommés et investis par le Mai, mais

sur la base du choix préalable des membres de leurs communautés respectives. A une échelle inférieure, des auxiliaires (*cima gana*) veillent au respect de la loi et au maintien de l'ordre, collectent les impôts, contrôlent le commerce et les activités agricoles, règlent les conflits mineurs, et veillent au respect des frontières entre les collectivistes.

Pour une meilleure articulation entre le centre et les périphéries, des dignitaires (*cima cidibe Kura* et *cima jilibe sura*) jouissant d'une grande autorité auprès de leurs communautés sont étroitement associés à la haute hiérarchie de l'Etat. Résidant à Bimi Ngazargamou, ils sont les défenseurs des intérêts de leur groupe auprès du souverain et effectuent régulièrement des visites dans leurs "*flefs*", jouant ainsi pour le compte de l'Etat, un rôle mobilisateur et intégrateur.

Sans la prospérité économique dont il a joui au cours des siècles, l'Etat du Bomou n'aurait pas pu assurer la cohésion d'un si vaste territoire. L'intégration économique de la région du Logone et Chari qui nous concerne était, pour l'Empire, un impératif catégorique. C'est là en effet qu'aboutissait la route de l'ivoire, qui passe au Sud du lac Tchad, longe le fleuve Chari par Makari, Kamako, Logone et Afade. L'ivoire, on le sait, était avec les esclaves, une denrée essentielle dans le commerce transsaharien entre le Bomou et les pays du Maghreb et du Machrek.

Les grands Etats historiques du Soudan central et occidental offrent des exemples intéressants qui peuvent servir de référence aux politiques contemporaines concernant l'ethnicité et l'intégration. Ils ont enclenché un processus qui aurait pu déboucher sur la formation de vastes entités intégrant diverses nationalités. Le cours de l'histoire aura cependant évolué défavorablement, La circumnavigation africaine, le déclin du commerce transsaharien et l'instauration de la traite esclavagiste atlantique ont eu pour conséquence la décontraction de ces formations et la ruine des pôles d'attraction anciens comme Tombouctou et Bimi Ngazargamou. La "course au clocher", le partage de l'Afrique et l'établissement des frontières coloniales au lendemain de la Conférence de Berlin (1884-85) intégra la "province bomouane du Kotoko" dans le nouvel ensemble du Kamaran allemand. Au lendemain de la Première Guerre Mondiale, le territoire fut placé sous administration française.

Pour le Logone et Chari, l'ère coloniale fut marquée par un déplacement des pôles d'attraction et des centres de décision vers le Sud, à des centaines de kilomètres en milieu équatorial. Le tracé des frontières établi sans une

prise en compte des réalités sociales, économiques et culturelles aboutit à la désintégration des communautés et à la dislocation des systèmes d'échanges préexistants. Le mode d'occupation, de gestion administrative d'organisation économique, inhérent à la politique de "mise en valeur coloniale" ne pouvait aboutir à l'échelle du territoire camerounais. Dans le Lagon et Chari, l'établissement du poste militaire et administratif de Kousséri ne visait qu'à réprimer les populations pour maintenir l'ordre colonial, favoriser l'économie de traite et assurer le recrutement de la main-d'œuvre. À la vérité, l'esprit jacobin et centralisateur, qui a toujours caractérisé les différents Hauts Commissaires établis à Yaounde, ne pouvait que reléguer le Logone et Chari, voire l'ensemble du Nord Cameroun, dans la marginalité. La concentration de la totalité des investissements dans les grandes villes du Sud et de développement du concept de "Cameroun utile" ont induit de graves déséquilibres régionaux qui, aujourd'hui encore, constituent des obstacles à l'intégration.

L'Etat postcolonial en effet, n'a pas su rompre avec les pratiques précédentes pour concevoir un type d'Etat assurant une gestion harmonieuse de l'espace territorial, conçu comme "cadre de vie". L'Etat postcolonial n'a pas inventé des institutions capables de promouvoir les libertés concrètes et de développer des communautés locales. Des lors, la territorialité, qui est l'un des fondements de l'Etat-Nation, est remise en cause, dans le Logone et Chari, par des populations qui, dans leur quête pour la survie, dans un contexte de crise économique rampante, font fi des frontières établies, Yaounde est très loin, à 1300km, et la défaillance de l'Etat qui n'assure que de façon évasive ses obligations n'est pas en mesure de renforcer la cohésion nationale. Des lors, on assiste à un processus de déconnexion du Logone et Chari de l'ensemble camerounais et à l'émergence de formes nouvelles de solidarités transfrontalières. Il importe, pour bien situer le problème, d'insister sur le caractère strictement nominal des frontières actuelles et sur la grande unité des populations dans le bassin du lac Tchad que se partagent le Cameroun, le Nigeria et le Tchad. Objectivement Kousséri apparaît comme la banlieue de Ndjamena et la circulation des personnes et des biens sur le pont de Ngueli qui relie les deux cités est édifiante. Des symptômes de déconnexion par rapport à l'entité Cameroun et d'attraction vers le Tchad sont nombreux, surtout avec la fin de la guerre civile dans ce dernier pays: il est curieux de noter que les rassemblements des grands partis politiques tchadiens drainent vers Ndjamena, de nombreux habitants de Kousséri qui

sentent leur destin lie a l'évolution politique du Tchad. Depuis quelques années, de nombreux jeunes bachelles issus du Logone et Chari (environ 70%) prennent leur inscription à l'Université de Ndjamena, au détriment de l'Université de N'Gaoundéré, créée pour jouer le rôle de pôle universitaire pour l'ensemble des trois provinces septentrionales. La découverte au Tchad d'importants gisements pétroliers a, dans l'imaginaire des populations, un effet considérable, qui déterminé un flot migratoire des populations de l'extrême Nord vers ce nouvel Eldorado.

Au plan économique, la déconnexion du Logone et Chari s'opère surtout au profit du Nigeria voisin, la grande métropole de Maidougouri jouant le rôle qui naguère était dévolu a Bimi Ngazargamou. La région est inondée de produits manufactures nigériens et les transactions se font essentiellement a l'aide du Naira, au détriment du Franc CFA. Ce constat amène à reconsidérer la notion d'intégration, en la situant non pas seulement dans le cadre des Etats-Nations nés de la décolonisation, mais par rapport a des espaces privilégiés par la géographie et l'histoire, et susceptibles de soutenir plus efficacement un développement régional endogène. On a comme l'impression que la crise de l'Etat-Nation en Afrique amène les zones périphériques a un repositionnement. Il en est ainsi du Logone et Chari qui semble renouer avec le passe, en se tournant davantage vers le Nord que vers le Sud, siège de l'autorité centrale. De ce point de vue, L'INTEGRATION ne doit pas être perçue de façon unilinéaire; elle n'est pas un processus unidimensionnel se limitant en termes de consolidation d'un espace territorial aux limites figées. L'intégration au contraire, doit être comprise de façon dialectique, en prenant en compte aussi bien les facteurs de consolidation, de fragmentation et de restructuration.

Ainsi en est-il du Logone et Chari ou opèrent à la fois des phénomènes de déconnexion et de recomposition. Il y a la des logiques et des dynamiques, générées par le bas, qu'il importe de laisser s'épanouir tout en les canalisant. C'est le rôle dévolu aux organisations régionales transnationales, telle la Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad (CBLT) qui regroupe le Cameroun, le Tchad, le Nigeria et le Niger, dans le souci d'une gestion plus rationnelle et soutenue des ressources communes.

La situation qui prévaut dans le Logane et Chari permet enfin d'éclairer la dialectique de l'Etat postcolonial et de l'insécurité en Afrique et d'enrichir la grille conceptuelle sur cette question cruciale. L'occasion s'offre aussi pour esquisser le débat sur les problèmes de sécurité et de défense nationale au

Cameroun. Les problèmes de SECURITE et de défense sont en effet les maillons de toute identité nationale, et la première mission de tout Etat c'est "d'assurer en tout temps et en toutes circonstances et contre toute forme d'agression, la sécurité et l'intégrité du territoire, ainsi que la vie de la population"¹²⁹. Or il est évident que dans le Logone et Chari, l'Etat camerounais ne parvient plus à assurer efficacement sa fonction de sureté. La région est alimentée par des dynamiques de violences; des situations belligérantes s'y sont développées qui en font la zone conflictuelle la plus sensible, après la péninsule de Bakassi, objet d'un contentieux frontalier avec le Nigeria. L'Etat ayant perdu dans le Logone et Chari le monopole de la violence armée. On assiste à l'émergence d'espaces qui échappent à l'administration et où les Forces Armées hésitent à opérer. La longue guerre civile et les conflits armés qui ont déstructuré l'Etat tchadien voisin ont eu une grande incidence sur la dissémination de la violence dans le Logone et Chari. Il y a tout d'abord l'afflux massif de réfugiés fuyant les combats à Ndjamena et rendant impossible toute gestion administrative. A cela s'ajoute la dissémination dans la région d'armes de guerre. Le Logone et Chari, à divers moments a même servi de vases de repli à des factions armées tchadiennes. La fin de la guerre au Tchad n'a pas résolu le problème. Le programme de réduction des effectifs de l'armée tchadienne et de réinsertion des "combattants" dans la vie civile ayant été chaotique, de nombreux éléments armés ont dépassé la frontière. Il est établi que certains ont loué leurs services, en temps que mercenaires, dans les conflits qui, en 1992, ont opposé Arabes et Kotoko. La situation au Tchad a eu pour conséquences d'exacerber le phénomène du grand banditisme dans la région.

Le phénomène du grand banditisme dans les steppes et savanes du Cameroun septentrional n'est pas un fait récent. Il est même très ancien, remontant à la période, quand des groupuscules munis d'armes blanches s'attaquaient à des voyageurs isolés sur des sentiers de brousse. Pendant les périodes coloniale et postcoloniale, le phénomène s'étend au vol du gros bétail et à l'attaque du courtier colonial et des éleveurs rentrant des marches périodiques. Ces bandits se couvrent le visage de cagoules ou alors se l'enduisent de bleu à linge, d'où le nom de "Zarguina" par lequel on les

¹²⁹ Par, Henri, *Politologie de la Défense Nationale*, Paris, Masson, 1986, p.15.

désigne alors, Ces malfrats bénéficient de la complicité agissante et de la protection des chefs traditionnels, véritables commanditaires des vols de gros bétail. Entre la fin des années 1970 et le début des années 1980, le conflit tchadien, en concourant à la dissémination des armes à feu, donne une nouvelle dimension à ce phénomène déjà ancien dans les abords sud du Lac Tchad. Désormais armes de fusils de tous genres, des bandes toujours plus importantes font irruption dans des villages ou des concessions isolées, exigent une réception solennelle et une rançon collective.

Le phénomène prend sa dimension actuelle, c'est-à-dire extraordinaire, meurtrière, spectaculaire et mystérieuse, à partir de 1990. Il a résulté de l'effet conjugué de la crise économique, de la dévaluation du franc CFA, de la sécheresse, du changement de régime du Tchad et de la crise interethnique dans le Logone et Chari. Laissés-pour-compte de la dévaluation et donc victimes d'un commerce désormais infructueux avec le Nigeria, compressés des entreprises publiques et privées déflatés de l'armée tchadienne, opposants au pouvoir de Ndjamena, errants de la faim, nécessiteux de tous genres et de toutes nationalités se constituent en bandes de rebelles sociaux imposantes par leur nombre, effrayantes par leur armement et leur absence de scrupules.

En fait, ils ont trouvé dans le Logone et Chari un terrain fort propice. Tout d'abord, c'est le lieu de transit obligatoire pour tous les commerçants tchadiens et ressortissants du Logone et Chari en partance pour le Nigeria. Ensuite, l'absence de banque sur l'ensemble du département oblige les opérateurs économiques à se déplacer avec d'importantes sommes d'argent liquide. Par ailleurs, l'environnement est instable et confus avec le conflit Arabes Kotoko, l'incertitude permanente au Tchad et les tensions internationales autour du lac Tchad. Enfin, le département est comme entre le Tchad et le Nigeria vers lesquels les bandits se replient très vite après leurs forfaits. "Les coupeurs de route" tels qu'on les appelle du fait des précédents d'embuscades par lesquels ils bloquent la circulation routière ont ainsi pris le Logone et Chari en otage. Les déplacements en partance pour ou en provenance du Logone et Chari sont devenus des aventures qui peuvent se solder par le dépouillement voire la mort.

Lassés d'attendre des mesures gouvernementales efficaces, les populations Arabes et Kotoko qui s'accusent mutuellement d'intelligence avec les bandits, se constituent en groupes de vigilance. C'est ainsi qu'en 1994, sous le regard indifférent et même approuvateur des pouvoirs publics, la communauté arabe entreprend dans le Serbewel, la partie septentrionale du

département. Mais cette action donne lieu à de nouvelles supputations quant au lien qui existerait entre les Arabes et les bandits. Le 13 Septembre 1995, les “coupeurs de route”, après neuf mois de répit, ont attaqué sur la Nationale n° 1, le convoi de véhicules partis de Maroua à destination de Kousséri. Ils ont pu rançonner les passagers en dépit de la présence dissuasive d’une escorte de deux voitures bondées de gendarmes. Ce qui amène les observateurs à se demander si la lutte contre le phénomène du grand banditisme dans le Logone et Chari relève encore du simple maintien de l’ordre ou s’il est désormais un problème de Défense Nationale. Il s’agit là d’une interrogation aux dimensions multiples.

Ce qu’il y a à retenir, c’est que les “coupeurs de route”, qui opèrent entre Zigue et Zigagne sur la Nationale N°1, à la frontière camerouno-nigériane ont véritablement coupé le Logone et Chari du reste de l’Extrême-Nord. Le département apparaît dès lors comme une excroissance du Cameroun. Cette Situation, combinée à la porosité des frontières crée de nouvelles solidarités avec le Nigeria et le Tchad compromettant dangereusement l’intégration de cette partie du territoire à la totalité camerounaise.

En guise de conclusion, on retiendra que le territoire du Logone et Chari, de par sa situation géographique et son évolution historique, reflète l’ambiguïté des rapports créés par l’Etat postcolonial aussi bien dans la gestion de l’ethnicité, dans sa rhétorique d’unification que dans la sécurisation des populations. On est tenté à cet égard de croire à l’échec des politiques de construction nationale dans les sociétés multiethniques, et de conclure à l’illusion de l’intégration. Il ressort de cette analyse que des facteurs multiples se sont combinés, pour créer une atmosphère de violence et d’exclusion entre les principaux groupes ethniques de la région que sont les Arabes et les Kotoko. Il est symptomatique que le processus de démocratisation ait plutôt amplifié les rancœurs et les antagonismes. Le cas du Logone et Chari, de par ses caractères excentrés, conduit aussi à formuler de nouvelles grilles d’analyse de la problématique de l’intégration. Celles-ci doivent tenir compte des dynamismes locaux et régionaux qui remettent en cause les perspectives unilinéaires de l’Etat centralisateur. Il s’agit en d’autres termes d’une remise en cause de l’espace national et d’un élargissement de perspectives à travers des stratégies transfrontalières,

Tout cela interpelle à la fois les hommes politiques les chercheurs en sciences sociales et l’ensemble des collectivités nationales et régionales afin de

définir des projets porteurs d'espoir et susceptibles d'assurer la paix et l'unité dans le respect de la diversité.

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Agro-Industry And Regionalism In The South West Province, Of Cameroon During The National Economic And Political Crisis

Piet Konings

The South West Province of Cameroon was born in 1972. Its birth marked the end of a unique experiment in Africa whereby the political elite of two regions with different colonial legacies—one French and the other British—had agreed on the formation of a federal state (Ardener, 1967; Johnson, 1970; le Vine, 1971; Benjamin, 1972; Forge, 1981). Stark (1976) has convincingly argued that from its very start in October 1961, federalism in Cameroon was more ‘shadow than reality’. During the negotiations between the two parties, it was already evident that the bargaining strength of the delegation from the Francophone region was much greater than that of the Anglophone delegation. Compared to the Francophone region, the size and population of the Anglophone region was small, comprising only 9 per cent of the total area and 21 per cent of the total population of the federation (Kofele-Kale, 1986). More important, at the time of the negotiations, the former French Trust Territory of Cameroun was already an independent state, having been renamed the Republic of Cameroun, while the British Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons was, by the terms of the United Nations plebiscite, still to achieve its independence by joining the sovereign Republic of Cameroon. Capitalizing on this ‘senior’ status of his region, Ahmadou Ahidjo, the then Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon and leader of the Francophone delegation, was able to dictate the terms for federation. Whereas John Ngu Foncha, then Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons and Anglophone delegation leader, had proposed a loose form of federalism, which he regarded as a guarantee for equal partnership of both parties and for preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of the Anglophone minority, Ahidjo eventually forced him to accept a highly centralized form of federalism. Ahidjo, who was to become the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, looked upon federalism merely as an unavoidable transitory phase to the total integration of the Anglophone minority into a strong,

Francophone-dominated unitary state (Chem-langhee, 1995: 24). To achieve this objective, he employed several tactics (Delancey, 1989: 52-65). One of these was to play Anglophone political factions off against each other and eventually unite them into the single party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU). Another was to eliminate from positions of power any Anglophone leaders who remained strongly committed to federalism, replacing them by others who favoured a unitary state. Still another was to create 'clients' among the Anglophone elite. By granting top posts in federal institutions and in the party to representatives of significant ethnic and regional groups in the Anglophone region, he tried to control these groups. Finally, he did not hesitate to repress any opposition. Through these and other tactics, he succeeded in putting an end to the federation. His justification for the 'glorious revolution of 20 May 1972' was that federalism fostered regionalism and impeded economic development (Stark, 1976). The vast majority of the Anglophones, however, did not attribute the emergence of 'regionalism' and lack of economic development to federalism per se, but rather to the hegemonic tendencies of the Francophone-dominated federal state. They soon began to resent their regional loss of autonomy and their integration as a subordinate minority into the unitary state. Their numerous grievances are mainly of a political, economic and cultural nature. These grievances concern in particular their under-representation and inferior role in the national decision-making councils, the neglect of the infrastructure and the exploitation of the region's economic resources, and the attempts at 'frenchification'.

The creation of the South West Province in 1972 was closely connected to the growing dissatisfaction of the Anglophone community with this subordinate position. There is no doubt that Ahidjo's decision after the 'glorious revolution' to divide the erstwhile Federated State of West Cameroon into two provinces, the South West and North West Provinces, was aimed at reducing the danger of any united Anglophone action against the Francophone-dominated state. In making his decision he was well aware of the internal contradictions within the Anglophone community between the coastal/forest people (the South West Province) and the Grassfield people (North West Province). One of the major reasons for these internal conflicts is the loss of hegemony by the South West elite in the Anglophone region. The coastal population had been exposed to early contact with Western trade, religion and education, giving it a head start over the

Grassfield population. An intelligentsia emerged in the coastal area, notably among the Bakweri, and it quickly rose to the forefront in the nationalist struggle and dominated the Anglophone political scene up to the end of the 1950s. The transfer of power from the South Westerner, Dr Emmanuel Endeley, to the North Westerner, Mr John Ngu Foncha, was a political event with significant repercussions for South West-North West relations. Following this transfer, the North West elite began asserting its presence. It soon became ubiquitous in the higher levels of government and in high non-governmental positions. In pre-empting for itself the choicest jobs as well as the best lands in the South West, it provoked strong resentment among South Westerners to North West domination (Kofele Kale, 1981). Regional sentiments have been intensified by the fact that the 'entrepreneurial' North Westerners have gradually succeeded in dominating most sectors of the South West economy, in particular trade, transport and housing (Rowlands, 1993). Another source of the South West-North West divide was the UN plebiscite of 1961: on that occasion, the South West showed considerable sympathy for alignment with Nigeria, as opposed to the Cameroonian choice which prevailed, mainly on the strength of the North West votes. A final source of tensions and conflicts is the massive labour migration from the North West to the South West and subsequent settlement of North Western workers in the South West. The lack of unity among the Anglophone elite and the severe repression during the Ahidjo period largely precluded the Anglophone community from openly expressing its grievances about Francophone domination until 1982, when Biya took power. Following the relative liberalization introduced by the new president, Anglophones began voicing their long-standing grievances. They not only protested against inadequate Anglophone representation and participation at decision-making levels of government, but they also addressed the more basic problem of the status of the Anglophone community in the nation. In changing the official name of the country from the 'United Republic of Cameroon' to simply the 'Republic of Cameroon' in 1984, the Biya administration argued that Cameroon had become more united and moved ahead to integration. Anglophones protested that the new name implied they had no problems; they also recalled that the new name was the same one Ahidjo had given to independent Francophone Cameroon before reunification. Regional tensions in Anglophone Cameroon were fuelled when it became manifest that the president's ethnic group, the Beti, were increasingly monopolizing political

and economic power. Like his predecessor, Biya attempted to divide the Anglophones. One of his strategies was to replace North Westerners, who held key positions in the South West, by South Westerners. During the economic and political crisis which arose in the mid-1980s, contradictions between the Anglophone community and the Francophone-dominated state and between the South West and North West were reinforced. The economic crisis and subsequent Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) severely affected the private and public enterprises in Anglophone Cameroon. The crisis was caused mainly by the dramatic fall of commodity prices on the world market. However, Anglophones were inclined to attribute the crisis first and foremost to the corruption and mismanagement of the Biya regime, which continued to enjoy strong French support. Their greatest anxiety was that the few remaining enterprises in their region would be either liquidated or sold to Francophone and French business interests. Although the South West elite entertained similar fears, they were equally opposed to a North West takeover of any important enterprises located in their province, for that would result in renewed North West domination over the South West.

The political crisis was aggravated when an opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF) was set up in Bamenda, the capital of the North West Province. Its massive launching rally in May 1990 ended in the killing of six young Anglophones by government troops. After this bloody event and the eventual legislation of a multi-party system, the SDF's influence spread in Anglophone Cameroon, but the party proved far more popular in the North West than in the South West, as the South West elite continued to be suspicious of the aspirations of the predominantly North Western leadership of the party. Interestingly, while the SDF claimed to be a 'national' rather than a 'regional' party, evidenced by its growing Francophone membership, the military 'occupation' "of the Anglophone region and brutalities towards its population led to the emergence and rapid growth of several Anglophone pressure groups, including the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) and the All Anglophone Conference (AAC). Most of them call for a return to the federal state; a few extreme ones call for outright secession (Mehler, 1993; Krieger, 1994). These movements have done much to foster unity among the Anglophone elite. One reason is that for tactical reasons the North West elite has largely left the leadership of these pressure groups to the South West elite.

The South West Province is the only region in Cameroon with a plantation economy. This can be traced back to the German colonial era (1884-1914). Two agro-industrial enterprises have long dominated the South Western plantation sector: one of them is a parastatal, the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), and the other is a private company, the Plantations Pamol du Cameroun Ltd, or Pamol, as popularly called. These enterprises have contributed greatly to regional development, and are therefore looked upon as the lifelines of the Anglophone region in general and the South West in particular. The economic crisis brought both companies to the verge of collapse. Pamol was put into voluntary liquidation by Unilever in October 1987 and has been up for sale ever since. The CDC was first deprived of public grants and subsidies, and since 1994 it is set for privatization. Control over both companies has become an issue raising regional sentiments. It has again brought to the fore the contradictions between the Anglophone community and the Francophone-dominated state as well as those between the South West and the North West.

The Liquidation And Sale Of PAMOL Estates

The Plantations Pamol du Cameroun Ltd (Pamol) was previously a subsidiary of the Unilever giant. Founded in the 1920s, it is one of the oldest agro-industrial enterprises in Cameroon. Its principal estates produce palm oil and are situated in the Ndian Division of the South West Province, an area bordering Eastern Nigeria (Courade, 1978). Economically, the Ndian Division is one of the most important areas in the country: it possesses large oil deposits at Idabato around Rio del Rey, as well as timber and oil palms. Paradoxically, despite its natural riches, it continues to be one of the most isolated and marginalized regions in the country. For a long time it was deprived of basic infrastructural provisions. There was no road connecting it with other parts of Cameroon, with transport occurring via a network of waterways (rivers, creeks, and sea). When a road was finally constructed between Ndian and Kumba during the seventies, it was usually not well maintained during the dry season and scarcely passable during the rainy season. The area appears to maintain closer links with Nigeria than with Cameroon, with many Nigerian fishermen, traders and peasants living in the area. Nigerian currency is still widely in circulation and Efik is the lingua franca in the maritime areas of the division. Legal and illegal trade with

Nigeria is prominently visible and provides lucrative income opportunities for some members of the local population. The main reason for the area's marginalization seems to be political. During the inter-war period it was a kind of no-man's land, in which the British authorities showed little interest. From 1945 onwards, it was an integral part of the Kumba Division. Being rather far from Kumba, it continued to be neglected by district authorities. It was not until 1967 that it was separated from the Kumba Division and declared an autonomous division by presidential decree. Still, hardly any development funds were allocated to the new division. Actually, it was still being penalized for the fact that during the 1961 plebiscite approximately 95 per cent of the local population voted for integration into Nigeria rather than reunification with Francophone Cameroon. A few months before the plebiscite, one of its foremost leaders, Mr N.N. Mbile., declared that his people were 'irrevocably [decided] never to accept union with the Cameroon Republic'. 'If on this we shall have to be killed to the last man', he pledged, 'it should rather be better that history records how a race of men died to the man fighting for their freedom' (cited in Johnson, 1970: 166). Following reunification, the Ndian Division was never honoured with a ministerial seat in the Federal government. Lack of national integration was also manifest in the low profile of the single party in the area. A few months before promulgation of the unitary state in 1972, the District Officer for the Ekondo Titi Subdivision reported:

The response to the call for buying and owning the party card is still slow. Meetings of cells and branches around the Headquarters have not been held and I have no reason to believe that the organs in the remote villages are more effective. I called up some other people and asked whether they owned the party cards and the answer they gave was amazing. They said since they do not travel they see no need to own the cards. Only people who are mobile need the cards because their kits are being inspected by the forces of law and order.

For the local population, Pamol was and still is the area's lifeline. It is felt that this company has realized what political rulers and regional barons have persistently failed in: the promotion of regional development. It is the only private enterprise in the area that employs a sizable labour force, having in its heyday 3,000-3,500 workers. It is responsible for 90 per cent of the Ndian Division's taxation revenue. It has constructed labour camps with an

adequate supply of water and electricity, hospitals, schools and roads. It has also rendered transport services to its workers and the local population. Local people still remember well that a company launch, the M.V. Rio, with a capacity of 45 passengers, was plying the Ndian-Lobe route three times a week. Last, but not least, the company stimulated from the early 1960s smallholders' schemes around its oil palm estates. Given its significant role in regional development for many decades, the announcement of Pamol's voluntary liquidation on 13 October 1987 caused a tremendous shock in Anglophone Cameroon, and in the Ndian Division in particular. For those familiar with the multitude of problems that beset the agro-industrial palm oil sector, however, the liquidation did not come as a complete surprise (Konings, 1989). Agro-industrial enterprises engaged in local palm oil production were poorly competitive on the world market due to low productivity and high production costs. As a result, they were highly dependent upon sales in the local market. From the early 1980s, however, they faced enormous market problems, for two main reasons:

- Government expansion of this sector had effected a staggering increase in output. Particularly the huge expansion of the two parastatals that dominate the sector, the CDC and the Société Camerounaise de Palmeraies (SOCAPALM), created the unprecedented situation that locally produced palm oil exceeded domestic demand by about 40 percent.

- Government incapacity or unwillingness to control the imports of cheap oils, especially refined oil from Malaysia, led to a further reduction in the domestic demand for locally produced palm oil

Inevitably, these two factors gave rise to keen competition, and even a price war, between Cameroonian agro-industrial enterprises in the domestic market, which forced prices down to a level far below production costs and the government recommended price. In the end, most could no longer avoid selling an increasing volume of palm oil on the world market. These exports occurred at a time that a 40 per cent increase in the value of the CFA franc against the US dollar had made locally produced palm oil even less competitive on the world market, while world market prices had collapsed to their lowest level in fifty years. In a desperate attempt to rid themselves of their growing stocks of perishable palm oil, Cameroonian agro-industrial enterprises were obliged to dump their produce on the world market, resulting in major financial losses. In December 1986, Unilever briefed the Biya government on the company's deteriorating financial position and urged

it to implement forthwith a series of protective measures for the ailing agro-industrial palm oil sector - in particular an increase in domestic palm oil prices, the imposition of a special tax on all imports of edible oils, and the granting of export subsidies. It complained once more that Pamol was unable to compete with the state-subsidized parastatals, even though the company was more productive and supplied higher-quality oil than the parastatals. To end this situation of unequal competition, it requested the government to grant Pamol similar low-interest loan facilities to those the parastatals enjoyed, to improve the roads leading to its estates and mill, and to render every possible assistance in the construction of a refinery. The then Minister of Industrial Development and Commerce, Mr Nomo Ongolo, rejected Unilever's request out of hand. He gave the following reasons for his refusal: Being confronted with a serious economic crisis after a long period of remarkable economic growth (Korner, 1987), the government was less inclined to allocate extra-funds to the ailing agro-industrial sector. Moreover, the government was of the opinion that a giant multinational like Unilever should not call upon the government for assistance during the crisis, but rather reinvest in Pamol a certain proportion of the substantial profits it had made in the country. Of course, one underlying reason for his blunt refusal was that the enormous expansion of the parastatals had made the government less dependent on multinational enterprises for the supplying of palm oil to the local market.

It was, however, widely believed in Anglophone Cameroon that the hidden agenda for his refusal was to engineer the closure of one of the leading private enterprises with British connections in their region, as a further step in the emasculation of the regional economic potential by the Francophone-dominated state. Some well-informed sources allege that Mr Nomo Ongolo was also personally interested in acquiring a stake in Pamol, for he knew very well that, following his disapproval of its request for assistance, Unilever would decline to subsidize a company which had incurred a loss of FCFA 1.3 billion between 1984 and 1987, and rather prefer to wind up its activities in Cameroon. In July 1987, Unilever informed the government of its intention to sell Pamol. The government, in turn, immediately gave Unilever in very clear terms to understand that the state was not going to take over the company. Already burdened with the huge losses of the agro-industrial parastatals during the economic crisis, it could not afford to buy Pamol, especially since the company's debts amounted to

about FCFA 4.2 billion and its neglected estates and mill required costly refurbishment. Moreover, in view of the economic crisis the government was no longer in favour of extending the role of the state in the agro-industrial sector; rather, it had adopted a policy that the existing agro-industrial parastatals should become self-sufficient and profitable and, in the event of failure, be either liquidated or privatized (Tedga, 1990). In the end, it strongly advised Unilever to sell the company to interested Cameroonian businessmen. Such a transaction would be a major contribution to the realization of one of the principal objectives of the government's 'New Deal' policies: getting various sections of the Cameroonian elite to set up medium sized and large-scale plantations (Konings, 1993; Takougang, 1993).

Unilever accepted this advice. It soon entered into secret negotiations with a small group of well-known North West businessmen, including Messrs Nangah, Ngufor, Buyo, Kilo, Nuiouat, and Acha. This business consortium was given legal advice by Mr Sendze, a renowned lawyer in Bamenda. Unilever had come into contact with this group through the mediation of the Pamol management staff, mainly composed of NorthWesterners. Having a personal interest in an eventual North West takeover of the company, some of these senior North Western managers continued to act as 'brokers' between Unilever and the North West business consortium and to provide this group with vital information on the company's situation. The North West group was well aware that any substantial investment in the domestic agro-industrial palm oil sector was a very risky undertaking. It justified its resolve to take over Pamol as follows:

- It was motivated in the first place by 'regional' sentiments rather than by (short-term) profit considerations. It was anxious to safeguard the employment of the company's labour force, the majority of which originated from the North West Province.

- It was convinced that the company's precarious financial position could be redressed in the long run provided that (i) the government would implement at once all the protective measures for the agro-industrial palm oil sector previously proposed by Unilever, and (ii) the company would be thoroughly reorganized.

Eventually, Unilever decided to sell the company to the North West group following the latter's agreement to take over Pamol's liabilities in the

form of long-term loans and to guarantee the payment of the workers' wages and termination benefits. A contract was then signed between both parties. It was this contract that raised regionalist sentiments among the South West elite. As soon as the secret 'deal' between Unilever and the North West group became known, the South West elite started to agitate against the North West takeover of Pamol and appealed to the state to intervene on its behalf. In a strongly worded petition presented to the Head of *State*, the South West elite stated categorically that it would never allow its ancestral lands, which had been occupied by Unilever for decades, to be 'colonized' and 'exploited' by North Westerners. It stressed that a North West takeover of Pamol would inevitably strengthen North West domination over the South West. It therefore made an urgent appeal to the state to annul the contract between Unilever and the North West group and support an eventual South West takeover of Pamol. This regional conflict painfully revealed the fragility of Ahidjo's 'hegemonic project' of national integration. In addition, the appeal of the South West elite forced the Biya government to take a stand on this politically delicate issue, thus risking being accused of serving specific regional interests rather than the national interest.

Initially, there appeared to be ample reason for government support of a North West takeover of Pamol. The North West group had taken considerable risks in its decision to buy Pamol in view of the precarious financial position of the enterprise and the generally unhealthy situation of the domestic agro-industrial palm oil sector. Despite the severe crisis in the national economy, the group had been able to raise the substantial capital resources required for the takeover of the company and its liabilities. Beyond any doubt it possessed the 'entrepreneurial' and managerial qualities to run the company. Furthermore, the takeover was in line with public policy of encouraging the various elite groups, whatever their ethnic or regional origin, to invest in medium-sized and large-scale agricultural plantations in any part of the country. Furthermore, there appeared initially to be no convincing reason for a positive response of the government to the South West appeal for the annulment of the agreement between Unilever and the North West group, precisely because that opposition was largely based on regional sentiments. Nor was any proof provided that the South West elite was capable of raising the necessary funds for a take-over of Pamol.

The South West elite then launched a political offensive to strengthen its bargaining position. It tried to impress upon the government that Unilever's

decision to sell the company to the North West group was unjust. Since Pamol was operating on South West ancestral lands, Unilever should have invited the South West group to make the first bid to purchase Pamol. It was also stressed that a close link existed between the company's plantation activities and regional development. This link was more likely to be preserved by a South West than a North West take-over. Finally, the government was warned that a North West takeover would give rise to widespread political discontent in the South West.

The effective mobilization of the regional elite was evidently a decisive factor in the eventual success of the South West political offensive. After this demonstration of unity and determination, the government did not dare to disappoint the South West, a region of vital importance to the national economy in terms of its rich oil, timber and agricultural resources (Ombe Ndzana, 1987). When the government finally announced that the contract between Unilever and the North West group would be announced, Unilever decided on 13 October 1987 to put the company into voluntary liquidation. It had become frustrated by government policies and it simply refused to renegotiate the sale of the company. Immediately after the company had been put into voluntary liquidation, a liquidator and a Committee of Inspection for the liquidation representing the principal creditors, in particular the state and several banks, were nominated. The liquidator appointed was Mr C.G. Mure, a Frenchman, who owned an auditing firm in Douala associated with Coopers and Lybrand. He seemed to be well qualified for the job, as he had already been involved in liquidating several private and public enterprises in the country.

During his first meeting with the creditors on 3 November 1987, he presented a situation report on the company's liquidation. In this report he argued that a public auction of the company assets would be a disaster for the Ndian Division in social and economic respects. He therefore proposed to maintain and run the company as an ongoing business and to seek possible solutions to its long-standing problems before selling it to a reliable buyer. He claimed that his unorthodox proposal was both in line with the 1961 Companies Act of Anglophone Cameroon, and feasible, as the situation at Pamol had not yet deteriorated beyond recovery. His proposal was approved by the creditors. This was a significant event, for it was the first time in Cameroon that a company chose to remain in business while in liquidation. The liquidator assumed the function of Chief Executive of the

company. He devised and implemented a series of measures to restore health to the company. He refused to pay accruing company and income taxes due to the treasury interests on bank overdrafts, and other liabilities, on the grounds that the company was in liquidation. Together with the other agro-industrial companies, he entered into negotiations with the government for a revitalization of the ailing agro-industrial palm oil sector. Eventually he succeeded in persuading the government to raise the domestic palm oil prices and to impose a surcharge tax on imported oils to protect local palm oil production. As a result of these measures, the chances of Pamol's survival were considerably enhanced. The liquidator then undertook to rehabilitate the estates. Intensified efforts were made to replant the estates, to refurbish the mill, to improve roads, and to buy new lorries for the transport of the produce. Unfortunately, the sale of palm oil, the company's main source of income and investment, remained problematic, as the parastatals began undercutting prices once again. Pamol was thus confronted in the early 1990s with a severe liquidity crisis and was unable to regularly pay its workers.

From the very start the liquidator had carried on negotiations for the sale of Pamol. Several business groups and companies have shown interest in purchasing Pamol. The most important are (i) the South West group, (ii) the Commonwealth Development Corporation (COMOEV), and (iii) the liquidator's group. The South West group was the first business consortium to inform the liquidator of its continuing interest in buying the company. The group had meanwhile formed a company, the so-called Cameroon Agro-Industrial Company (CAMAGRIC), which aimed at take-over of Pamol. Its chairman was Chief Mosah Allen Misembe, a businessman hailing from the Ndiain Division. Closely connected with CAMAGRIC were some long-established South Western businessmen like Michael Atabong and Monango Williams, as well as some politicians and bureaucrats who had moved into business more recently, such as Nerijs Nomaso Mbile and Sylvester Dioh. Its legal adviser was Dr Henry Enonchong. The company began issuing shares at 25,000 FCFA each. According to well-informed sources, CAMAGRIC was initially unable to raise more than 50 million FCFA, including 10 million FCFA from its chairman. Obviously it was easier to mobilize the South West elite for a protest action against a North West takeover of Pamol than for a risky capital investment in the liquidated company. The purchase bid of CAMAGRIC was 500 million FCFA, which the liquidator categorically rejected as not reflecting the true value of Pamol

assets estimated by the Hunting Technical Service of London at 5 billion FCFA. The liquidator in fact continued to doubt CAMAGRIC's capacity to raise the huge capital resources needed for purchase of the company, take-over of its liabilities, and refurbishment of its estates and mill. The group tried all sorts of pressures, including aggressive letters and interviews, requests for political intervention, and the spread of tendentious and erroneous information, to persuade the government to order the closure of Pamol, enabling the group to buy the company at the price offered. These pressures yielded no results. The government seemed no longer inclined to intervene on behalf of the South West group. Represented in the Committee of Inspection for the liquidation, the government seemed to fully agree with the strategy of the liquidator: to restore the company to some health before selling it to a reliable and financially strong buyer. There is proof that some high-ranking government officials of South Western origin were also connected with the South West group and CAMAGRIC, albeit mostly behind the scenes. In 1988 a delegation from this group led by Mr Gorky Ebor Ntui, the then Minister with Special Duties at the presidency, met with the liquidator, informing him that they wanted to buy Pamol, with a loan from BCCI, a bank regularly accused of maintaining close ties with the drugs 'mafia'. Apparently, Mr Gorky Ebor Ntui was interested in turning Pamol into an Indian hemp company, and asked the liquidator to accept the post of personnel manager. Upon the liquidator's refusal, he used his ministerial powers to frustrate Pamol's activities. Company lorries were held up for long periods at customs, and with the complicity of a bailiff at Kombi, a number of them were even seized by the minister, who later offered them for sale at a public auction.

A renewed attempt to buy Pamol was being undertaken by the South West Elite Association (SWELA), which was founded in 1991. SWELA was an attempt to unite all the existing elite associations in the South West, including CAMAGRIC, into one single organization. Its leadership continually claimed that SWELA was a non-political pressure group, the main aim of which was to promote the socio-economic development and cultural revival of the South West Province. The South West was to be restored to its 'former glory' after being marginalized by the Francophone-dominated state and subjected to 'Grassfield imperialism'. Clearly, fear of a renewed North West domination over the South West was one of the underlying motives for the association's foundation. SWELA came into

existence after the launching of the SDF and the latter's subsequent expansion into the South West. On several occasions, SWELA leaders, especially those closely allied with the ruling regime issued public statements blaming the SDF for acts of violence and anti-government activities in the South West. SWELA is subdivided into chapters representing different subdistricts. It holds annual conferences to plan development priorities and evaluate past activities. Its planned development projects include the improvement of infrastructural facilities neglected by the Francophone-dominated state. They include the rehabilitation of Limbe harbour and Tiko airport, the establishment of an Anglophone university at Buea, and the promotion of cultural festivals in the region. SWELA also strives to establish South West control over the remaining enterprises in the region, especially the oil refinery at Limbe and important agro-industrial companies. Recently, splits have occurred in SWELA. The association has become divided into: a group which maintains close links with the Biya regime and the ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), and often displays strong anti-North West sentiments. This is why many people continue to see SWELA as a CPDM appendage and a resurrection of VIKUMA - the Victoria-Kombi-Mamfe alliance propagated in the mid-1960s by Walter Wilson Mbong to destroy 'graffi' domination over the South West. This group is composed of the older and younger CPDM 'barons' like Emmanuel Tabi Egbe, Peter Agbor Tabi, Joseph Takem, and Ephraim Inoni, as well as important South West chiefs like Mola Samuel Endeley and Nfon Victor Mukete. It opposes the return to the federal state advocated by the Anglophone pressure groups. Like the CPDM government, it champions the ten-state option, which would retain the present separation between the South West and North West Provinces and thus safeguard South West autonomy-a group which is more critical of government policies and often allied to opposition parties, including the SDF: This group vehemently condemned the military brutalities in the South West during the 1993 government anti-smuggling campaign. It advocates closer cooperation between the South West and North West as a necessary precondition for effective representation of Anglophone and South West interests. It strongly supports the Anglophone demand for a return to the federal state. SWELA wants to monitor the sale of Pamoland eventually buy the company. Since 1993 it is urging its members to subscribe to shares at 50,000 FCFA each for the takeover of Pamol. The Commonwealth Development Corporation

(COMDEV) is another serious candidate for the take-over. It offered 3.2 billion FCFA for the purchase of the company. The purchase would be made through a new company to be created, the *Société d'Exploitation de l'Entreprise Pamol* (S.E.E. Pamol). COMDEV was ready to furnish the company with a loan of 1.2 billion FCFA at a 9 per cent interest rate, repayable over 10 years. The minimum capital of the company would be 1 billion FCFA. COMDEV would subscribe to only 20 per cent of the share capital of the new company. It has committed itself to implement company policy of promoting smallholders schemes. This would lead by the year 2000 to 60 per cent palm oil production by smallholders. It has also promised to construct a refinery with a minimum capacity of 20 tons a day. At one stage of the negotiations, the Meridian Bank International, whose General Manager is president of the Inspection Committee for the liquidation, proposed a joint venture: COMDEV 20 per cent, Meridian Bank International 40 per cent, and Palma Limited Company 40 per cent, the last being a holding company whose shareholders would be (i) Pamol staff, (ii) smallholders interested in the future of Pamol, and (iii) Cameroonian businessmen from all quarters. In September 1993, Pamol workers and managerial staff announced that they had more confidence in COMDEV than in SWELA, because of COMDEV's international reputation, proven financial background and experience in the management of companies and plantations in Africa, including Cameroon. That Pamol workers and managers preferred COMDEV to SWELA is not altogether surprising, since most of them hail from the North West Province. However, I found that South western workers, too, had more faith in COMDEV than in SWELA. All Pamol workers and management staff stressed that the English-speaking origin of COMDEV was an additional reason to welcome its take-over of Pamol. Unlike the French, the British were not out to dominate Anglophone Cameroon. Moreover, the English-speaking business culture fitted well in Anglophone Cameroon.

Apparently the liquidator, too, became interested in purchasing the revitalized company within the conditions spelt out by COMDEV. To this end, he appears to have formed a consortium of Cameroonian investors with solid international backing. Remarkably, however, Pamol workers and managerial staff in September 1993 strongly rejected the presence of the liquidator in any group of prospective buyers 'in view of his gross mismanagement of the company in liquidation'. This is a clear expression of

their striking change of attitude towards the liquidator during his tenure of office. The liquidator was once hailed as the 'saviour of Pamol' and commanded great respect among the workers. When the initial euphoria about the company's possible survival was over and Pamol started to face liquidity problems, workers and managers alike became increasingly disgruntled with the liquidators behaviour. The liquidator turned out to be extremely arrogant and authoritarian. Contrary to the Unilever style of management, he was in the habit of treating even the most senior managers with disdain bordering on contempt; and following the renewed deterioration in the company's situation, he refused to consult any of them. His French nationality, too, became increasingly problematic after the Biya regime had fuelled existing contradictions between Francophones and Anglophones (Gaillard, 1992). His appointment was now perceived retroactively as yet another example of Francophone domination over the Anglophone region. Pamol workers and managers strongly resented the liquidator's poor command of the English language. They were infuriated when he created the impression that he preferred Francophone to Anglophone managers. He recruited a dozen well-paid Francophone graduates to understudy the Anglophone managers in order to eventually take over the latter's responsibilities. This led to considerable confusion in the existing chain of command and fierce conflicts between the Anglophone managers and the liquidator and his Francophone graduates.

There was, moreover, a general consensus within the company that the reward for the liquidator's services was out of proportion to the income of even the most senior managers. Without consultation he appears to have rewarded himself fees and allowances amounting to 430 million FCFA during his 5.5-year tenure of office (October 1987-May 1993), even though he spent most of his time in Douala where he lived and ran his auditing firm. He commuted between Douala and Pamol headquarters at Lobe once or twice a week by chartered plane, costing the company more than 1 million FCFA per return trip. Little wonder that many people inside and outside the company believed he was not eager to sell the company because of his vested interest in the continuation of the liquidation. Furthermore, there is no doubt that his close contacts with the Biya regime were widely resented in the company. Several informants told me that the liquidator was given to boast about his connections with high-ranking officials right up to the presidency. They also alleged that he dipped his hand into company coffers to ensure

Biya's re-election in the presidential elections in 1992: he is said to have provided the South Western Minister John Ebong Ngolle, a close friend, with a new Pajero and a substantial sum to allow him to campaign for Biya in the South West Province. Understandably, his well-known contacts with the Biya regime did not endear him to the company's workers and managerial staff, the vast majority of whom supported the candidature of John Fru Ndi, chairman of the SDF, during the presidential elections. It is reported that after Biya's victory in the fraudulent elections, the liquidator led a group of Biya loyalists to the house of Dr I.N. Timti, a North Western manager, on what he described as a 'condolence' mission. On that occasion he is alleged to have said, 'Please, accept my sympathy that your leader has lost the elections, so you will not replace me as the company's General Manager'. These factors, together with the liquidator's inability to pay the workers during the company's severe liquidity crisis in 1992/93, led the workers to embark on a two-month strike on 10 March 1993. On that fateful day, the liquidator barely escaped from being lynched by the workers, being rescued just in time from his hiding place on the estate by the military.

On 26 April 1993, the Committee of Inspection for the liquidation resolved it would henceforth take over responsibility for the liquidation. The Mundemba High Court first suspended the liquidator from duty on 4 May 1993 and later dismissed him on 15 November 1993. On 8 May 1993, the Committee of Inspection created a local management committee led by Dr I.N. Timti to run the company. The liquidator's prediction that the company would crumble after his departure has not yet materialized. It is still alive though it continues to face formidable liquidity problems. In these Circumstances, it is unlikely that a reliable buyer can be found.

State Withdrawal and Privatization of the CDC

The CDC is the largest agro-industrial enterprise in Cameroon. It is the country's second largest employer of labour, surpassed only by the government. It formerly employed 25,000 workers. At present it still employs about 15,000 permanent workers and a few thousand seasonal and casual ones. It is one of the few agro-industrial enterprises in the world that specialize in a variety of crops, its four major crops being rubber, palm oil, tea and bananas. The CDC was founded in 1946, but its roots can be traced back to the German colonial period (1884-1914) (Ardener et al. 1960; Epale,

1985; Konings, 1993). During that period many large-scale private plantations were created in the present South West Province, particularly on the fertile, volcanic soils in the area around Mount Cameroon. The establishment of a plantation economy in the region led to, the expulsion of the original occupants of the land, notably the Bakweri, into prescribed restricted native reserves (Courade, 1981/82). At the start of World War II, the German plantations were expropriated by the British. After the war, a decision had to be reached on how to dispose of the expropriated estate lands. The educated Bakweri elite, organized in the so-called Bakweri Land Committee, immediately began agitating for retrieval of its ancestral lands. It sent several petitions, first to the British Crown, and subsequently to the United Nations. The British authorities ignored the Bakweri claims and eventually decided to form a public enterprise, the CDC, which was charged with development and management of the ex-German estate lands for the benefit of the people of the Trusteeship territory. It was also to provide for the spiritual, educational and social welfare of its employees. Any profit realized after the corporation had met its statutory obligations, discharged its normal functions, and placed in reserve such sums as might be required for effectively running the enterprise, was to be paid to the public authorities for the purpose of developing the Trusteeship territory.

Some students of plantation agriculture, such as G. Beckford (1972), have blamed the persistent poverty and underdevelopment of Third World economies on this mode of production. In the case of the CDC, however, this thesis finds little support, for the corporation has been a major instrument of modernization and is largely credited with whatever socioeconomic development has occurred in Anglophone Cameroon. It has created employment for many men and women. It has constructed numerous roads. It has supplied water and electricity. It has built and staffed schools. It has awarded a substantial number of scholarships. It has provided medical care for a relatively large proportion of the local population. It has stimulated the supply of goods and services to itself and its workers. And it has played an important role in the commercialization and modernization of peasant production - as an intermediary in marketing the Bakweri peasantry's banana production during the fifties (Ardener, 1958; Geschiere, 1995) and in the establishment of regional smallholders' oil palm and rubber schemes from the early sixties (Konings, 1993). As a result, the CDC has often been called the economic lifeline of Anglophone Cameroon. In 1960, one year before

Cameroonian reunification, an important change took place in the management of the corporation. COMDEV took over the management of the corporation and invested 1 million pounds in it. It managed the corporation until 1974, when a North Westerner, Mr J.N. Ngu, was appointed General Manager. Following reunification, one may observe increasing intervention by the Francophone-dominated federal state in this Anglophone corporation, and an increasing dependence of the corporation on foreign financial institutions for its modernization and expansion: In the period 1967-87, the corporation expanded its cultivated area from about 20,000 to 40,000 ha with loans supplied by several external financiers, including the World Bank, the International Development Association (IDA), the European Development Fund (FED), COMDEV, and the (French) Central Fund for Economic Cooperation (CCCE). In compliance with the terms of the external loans, the Federal state in 1966 began contributing to the corporation's equity share capital, which had formerly been divided between the Federal State of West Cameroon and the West Cameroon Marketing Board. The Federal Minister of Planning and Territorial Development became the corporation's Supervisory Minister. In the wake of the promulgation of the unitary state, decree no. 73/597 of 28 September 1973 charged the corporation with a mission to contribute to national development and announced a new Memorandum and Articles of Association under which the CDC had to operate. One article made the United Republic of Cameroon and the National Produce Marketing Board (ONCPB) the exclusive shareholders of the corporation. In 1977 the government ordered the CDC management to expand outside the South West Province, a further attempt to transform the CDC from a 'regional' into a 'national' corporation. As a result, the CDC now owns estates in the North West, West and Littoral Provinces. Since 1982 the chairman and the general manager of the corporation are no longer appointed by the CDC Board of Directors, but by decree. Strikingly, despite these integrative efforts, the people of Anglophone Cameroon in general and the South West Province in particular have continued to perceive the CDC as 'their' corporation.

The CDC has been one of the few agro-industrial enterprises in Cameroon which had generally positive operational results, though these fluctuated over the years. As a public enterprise it continued to receive large annual government subsidies and grants, irrespective of performance:

between 1981 and 1987 the CDC received approximately 93 million FCFA from the government. Similarly to other agro-industrial enterprises in Cameroon the CDC has suffered a severe economic crisis since 1986. In the three years preceding the crisis (1983/84-1985/86), the corporation was still making substantial profits, totalling 3.2 billion FCFA. The crisis, however, had a dramatic impact on the corporation's financial situation: during the period 1986/87-1990/91 it suffered a loss of about 18 billion FCFA (Konings, 1995). The main reasons for this crisis have been mentioned above. There have also been frequent reports of involvement by the managerial elite in massive embezzlement, reckless expenditure, waste, and struggle for power often based on ethnic and regional considerations.

The South West-North West divide, in fact, has often paralyzed the corporation's administration. Since reunification, the chairman of the CDC Board of Directors has usually been a South Westerner. Prominent SWELA members like Nfon V. Mukete, Chief S. Endeley, and Messrs John Ebong Ngolle and Nerus Nomaso Mbile have occupied this position. The daily management of the corporation, however, has been dominated by North Westerners. The appointment of the North Westerner, Mr J.N. Ngu, as the CDC General Manager occurred on the 'advice' of the corporation's external financiers, but it was strongly resented by the South Western managerial elite. First, there were also suitable South Western candidates for this post, particularly Mr I.N. Malafa who used to be senior to Mr Ngu in the corporation's hierarchy, having served as the Deputy General Manager during the last years of COMDEV management. Second, the South Western managerial elite feared that Ngu's appointment would reinforce North West' domination over the CDC management. Ngu's thirteen years of office have been marked by strong anti-North West feelings, he, himself being regularly accused by the South Western managerial elite of favouring his own 'countrymen'. Ngu's severe conflicts with two of the South Western chairmen of the CDC, Nfon V. Mukete and Chief S. Endeley, have become almost legendary.

When Biya started to appoint some South Westerners to key positions in the South West to reduce North West 'domination' and to achieve 'regional balance', his friend Ngu was replaced in 1988 by Mr Peter Mafany Musonge, a Bakweri. Ngu was then appointed Minister of Agriculture, a post which, incidentally, had meanwhile become Supervisory Minister of the CDC. 'In this capacity, Ngu continued to interfere in the CDC, denying his successor

the freedom to discharge his duties. The South Western managerial elite alleged that Ngu was using his 'brothers' among the management staff to pester or even to get rid of Musonge. Together with other sections of the South Western elite, they put constant pressure upon Musonge to reduce North West influence in the corporation. Particularly after the foundation of the SDF, SWELA and the Bakweri elite urged Musonge to sack those North Western managers 'suspected' of being SDF supporters. In a strongly worded petition, the Bakweri Elite Youth Wing declared in July 1991: This is a reminder of an earlier letter to you this year in which we requested you to support our fight against SDF and their 'Graffl' domination that has caused the Bakweri people to be deprived of what belongs to them. Mola, you have to redundant the following 'grasslanders' who are strong supporters of SDF. They are Mr Ngeh F., Chie W., Tatani, Ndenesho, and Fomuso. Do this now. We are behind you. You are also supported by Chief Justice S.M.L. Endeley and all Vikumas.

Without any doubt, these internal conflicts within the CDC management impeded management capacity to combat the economic crisis. Managerial problems were aggravated by the fact that the government was no longer prepared to render any financial assistance to the ailing parastatal. To save the company from total collapse, the management and the trade unions on the CDC estates agreed to adopt a series of adjustment measures aimed at cost reduction and productivity increase (Konings, 1995).

This managerial strategy for economic recovery was reinforced in 1989/90 when the IMF and World Bank-inspired SAP demanded a restructuring of the parastatal sector. The CDC management was then obliged to sign a four-year performance contract (1989/90 - 1993/94) with the government (Tedga, 1990), under which the corporation was expected to achieve a set of objectives relating to plantation development, production costs, quantity and quality of output, and personnel productivity. In return, the government wrote off some of the corporation's debts amounting to 9 billion FCFA and exempted it from payment of certain taxes.

The various adjustment measures brought some relief to the company's liquidity problems but, owing to the continuing decline in commodity prices, the company's survival remained precarious. In June 1992, the Biya government, highly dependent on French support and aid, managed to obtain a 7 billion FCFA low-interest loan for the ailing company from the French CCCE. Although this loan provided much-needed capital for

investment purposes, the increased control of France over the corporation was strongly resented by CDC workers and managers, as well as by the wider public in Anglophone Cameroon. It was rumoured that the CCCE was interested in taking over the management of the CDC oil palm estates, and this again resulted in widespread protest in Anglophone Cameroon. This regional outcry against the supposed increasing French control over the corporation was in sharp contrast to regional sentiments about former and later transfers of management of two major CDC crops to English-speaking companies. Few protests were voiced in Anglophone Cameroon when the corporation entrusted management of the banana sector to the American multinational, Del Monte, in 1987. Regional newspapers even lauded the agreement signed between the CDC and COMDEV in late 1992, stipulating that management of the corporation's three tea estates be transferred to COMDEV for a period of 10 years. From 1992 onwards, persistent rumours were in circulation in Anglophone Cameroon that the Biya government was about to either sell, liquidate or privatize the CDC. While World Bank sources confirmed that the external financiers were putting strong pressure on the government to do so, the government continued to deny these rumours. On 15 July 1994, however, the government issued a decree announcing the privatization or liquidation of a first batch of 15 public enterprises, notably in the transport and agro-industrial sectors (Konings, forthcoming). The CDC was one of the most conspicuous 'victims' of this decree. The announcement caused a great commotion in Anglophone Cameroon. All existing parties, organizations and associations, among them the SDF, SWELA, Chiefs, and Anglophone pressure groups such as the CAM and the AAC seemed to forget their differences as they rallied in protest against what they perceived as 'the attempt of the Biya government to sell this sizable corporation, which has been for long the pride of Anglophone Cameroon, to France'. Some also alleged that privatization was a 'plan of Biya to compensate his "tribesmen" and allies with a slice of 'the parastatal cake'. One local paper claimed that the government was offering the CDC 'at low cost to cronies'.

There were protest marches in the Anglophone towns. Protesters carried banners with slogans as 'France: hands off Anglophones' and 'Hands off or we will burn the plantations'. CDC workers went on strike, for they thought privatization would mean retrenchment. A memorandum to Biya, co-signed by Anglophone pressure groups including the newly created Southern

Cameroons National Council, by chiefs and by prominent local landowners, contended that the CDC was not for sale as (i) local landowners, in particular the Bakweri, had neither relinquished ownership of CDC land nor received any royalties for the use of their land since the corporation's foundation in 1946, and (ii) CDC workers had injected over 5.5 FCFA billion into the corporation as compulsory savings during the crisis. In August 1994, the Biya government sent a delegation composed of Anglophone ministers to the capitals of the two Anglophone provinces to appease the population. They were jeered, however, and accused of wanting to 'benefit from the spoils'. In Buea, the capital of the South West Province, they met an assembly of the powerful association of South Western chiefs. Mola S. Endeley, Paramount Chief of the Bakweri and ex-chairman of the CDC, was spokesman for the latter, and he expressed to the delegation the region's bewilderment at being sacrificed on the altar of 'uncontrolled liberalization'. Though close to the regime, he did not shrink from protesting against the 'underground manoeuvres to deprive the local population of its most precious possession, land', emphasizing:

Our lands are not for sale. We are against the privatization of the CDC. Please, hand over this message of the presidency to the republic. The privatization protest movement was one of the recent developments in Anglophone Cameroon that made the Biya regime painfully aware of the growing unity and determination among the Anglophones in their struggle for redress of the marginalization and subordination of their region within the Francophone-dominated state.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the economic and political crisis in Cameroon has reinforced existing regional sentiments among the South West elite. These regional sentiments appear ambivalent, however. This is manifest in their struggle for control over the two major agro-industrial enterprises located in the South West Province. At most times, they tend to adopt an Anglophone identity and to resist any attempt of the Francophone-dominated state to dismantle the Anglophone common colonial legacy. Consequently, when rumours spread that the Biya regime intended to sell the few remaining 'Anglophone' companies to Francophone or French business interests, they rallied with the North Western elite in defence of the

Anglophone patrimony. But as soon as they suspect the North Western elite of being interested in establishing control over economic resources in the South West, they are inclined to adopt a South West identity, for fear of renewed North West domination over their province. Significantly, my study provides evidence that, in the wake of the introduction of multi-partyism in late 1990, Anglophone interests in general and South West interests in particular have not been represented by the newly created political parties in the Anglophone region, but rather by the emerging 'non-political' associations and pressure groups of the South West and Anglophone elite. While personal animosities among South Western political leaders formed a divisive element in the South Western political space, North Western political leaders proved capable of founding a strong political party, the SDF, which soon became the principal opposition party in the country against the Biya regime, with a growing membership in the South West. Nevertheless, it would appear that the SDF is now losing its initial appeal in Anglophone Cameroon. This is especially because the SDF gradually came to present itself as a 'national' rather than a 'regional' party, and to adopt an ambivalent, half-hearted stand towards the 'Anglophone problem' and the Anglophone demand for a return to the federal state (Krieger, 1994). The positive response in both the South West and North West Provinces to the 1994 actions by Anglophone pressure groups in protest against the Biya government's privatization of the CDC demonstrates that the South West-North West divide has been reduced in recent years. With the exception of those who continue to be co-opted in the 'hegemonic alliance' for private gains, the Anglophone elite has become increasingly aware of the importance of common struggles against the Francophone-dominated state. The brutal clampdown of the Biya regime on the South West Province in 1993 was a decisive factor in drawing still hesitant members of the South West elite into the ranks of the Anglophone pressure groups. At present, many of them claim simultaneous membership of SWELA, AAC and other Anglophone pressure groups. While some members of the South Western elite and chiefs, particularly those closely allied to the regime in power, continue to champion a 10-state federation with a view to preserving their province's autonomy versus the North West Province, the majority of the South West elite, like that of the North West, seems to be opting for a return to the federal state. The Biya regime attempts to ignore the 'Anglophone problem' and to create divisions within the Anglophone community, accusing the AAC and its

affiliated organizations of having adopted secession of Anglophone Cameroon as their goal. Biya has persistently refused to discuss any constitutional reforms for a return to a federal state. The regime's arrogance and clumsiness on the issue, as well as its increasing resort to repression, could lead to an escalation of Anglophone demands past a point of no return.

Notes

1. For the numerous Anglophone complaints, see, for instance, AAC, The Buea Declaration, 2-3 April 1993, Limbe: Nooremac Press.

2. For a critique of some of the Anglophone complaints, see Kofele-Kale, 1986 and Olinga, 1994.

3. See Buo, S.Kum, 'Biya and the Anglophones', *West Africa*, 12 August 1985, p. 1640.

4. Political Report on Ekondo Titi Subdivision for March 1972, by Mr Michael Nkamsi, D.O., in: BNA, file Cd (1972)2, Political Reports on Ekondo Titi Subdivision. See also Monthly Political and Economic Report for the Month of April, 1970, in: BNA, file 1969/1, Divisional Economic and Political Reports.

5. *The Messenger*, 14 October 1993, pp. 8-9.

6. Minutes of a Meeting with Labour Officials, Pamol Management, Staff Representatives, Trade Unionists and the Administration to discuss the problems of non-payment of salaries to Pamol workers, held in the Conference Hall of Korup National 'Park on 8 March 1993, in: file MTPS/SWP/MND.49Nol. 2, General Correspondence -Plantations Pamol du Cameroun Ltd.

7. See, for instance, *The Herald*, 28 December 1993, pp. 1-2; and *The Messenger*, 9 Sep. 1993, p. 7

8. His propagation of this alliance led to his imprisonment in 1965 as well as the banning of his newspaper, *The Spokesman*.

9. Report of the National Security at Ekondo Titi, dated 22 September 1993, in: file G 4002/49, Vol. 3, Pamol Cameroon' Ltd -General Correspondence.

10. See Memorandum to the Chairman, Inspection Committee of Pamol, presented by the workers of Pamol deliberating at Lobe on 16 Sep. 1993, Archives Pamol Headquarters, Lobe.

11. Ibid
12. The Messenger, 17 June 1993, p. 14.
13. The New Standard, 30 July 1991, p. 6.
14. See New African, no. 326, January 1995, p. 25; and Africa International, no. 279/280, January-February 1995, p. 39.

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Le Royaume Bamoum, Les Chefferies Bamiléké Et L'état Au Cameroun

Ibrahim Mouiche

Le Cameroun postcolonial a été un des cadres par excellence d'expérimentation et d'application du centralisme. Comme l'Etat-nation, il cumule tous les inconvénients du partage et de la balkanisation arbitraires de l'Afrique aussi bien au plan géographique qu'historico-culturel: les pieds dans la forêt équatoriale dense, la tête dans le Sahel presque désertique, le tronc fait d'une immense zone de savane, tel est le Cameroun géographique dont la logique du ciselage des frontières échappe à l'observateur le plus averti. Cela a fait dire avec raison d'ailleurs que le Cameroun géographique était une aberration; sur le plan historico-culturel, l'on doit gérer ici non seulement le double héritage colonial anglo-saxon et français mais encore la coexistence des groupes ethniques aux cultures souvent antagonistes (Collectif "Changer le Cameroun", 1992: 7).

Raison pour laquelle le thème de la représentation de toutes les ethnies du pays aux postes de direction de l'appareil d'Etat s'est toujours situé constamment au centre de notre vie politique. Ce thème ne se rattache à aucune idéologie démocratique raillée au suffrage universel. Il s'agit plutôt comme l'affirme Guy Landry Hazoume (1972: 26; voir également J. L. Amselle et Elikia M'Bokolo: 1985) d'une variante originale de la démocratie, d'une sorte "d'ethnocratie" (si nous pouvons user de ce neologisme) en laquelle on veut voir la seule forme de gouvernement capable de réaliser l'harmonie "nationale" et d'assurer la participation universelle des citoyens aux tâches d'administration de l'Etat. Cette idéologie suppose la présence physique au banc du gouvernement d'un enfant de la région ou de l'ethnie. Ce que Jean-François Bayart (1985: 193) a pu appeler à juste titre le "processus moléculaire de l'assimilation réciproque" opère de février 1958 à novembre 1982 par le régime Ahidjo. Ces décennies ayant vu l'émergence d'une vaste alliance regroupant les différents segments régionaux, politiques, économiques et culturels de l'élite sociale.

Ainsi, lorsque M. Ahidjo composait son gouvernement, il ne se préoccupait pas uniquement de veiller à ce que les représentations provinciales soient assurées, à ce que les grands équilibres géopolitiques soient respectés. À l'intérieur de chaque province, il réalisait simultanément un "microdosage qui se superposait aux macro-équilibres géopolitiques et permettait de mieux chevaucher les réalités sociopolitiques que sont les ethnies" (Ngayap, 1983: 80-83) à l'instar des Bamoum et des Bamiléké à l'Ouest du pays.

La politique du Renouveau du Président Paul Biya depuis 1982 marquée par une certaine continuité de l'héritage Ahidjo (voir Gaillard, 1989, II; Collectif "Changer le Cameroun", 1992: 526-527) va dans le même sens, puisque dans nos sociétés africaines "le tribalisme" compte parmi les premiers instruments idéologiques des bourgeoisies dirigeantes. Aussi doivent-elles en saluer le maintien et renforcer la présence avec les moyens discrets et insidieux, culturels et politiques que l'appareil d'Etat et sa machine de propagande leur fournissent.

Chefferies Bamiléké Ou Chefferies Rivales, Echange Et Opposition Avec Le Royaume Bamoum

Les Bamoum et les Bamiléké sont les deux grands groupes qui peuplent l'Ouest du Cameroun¹³⁰. Les Bamoum sont un groupe mixte descendant des conquérants Tikar et des Bamiléké qui, avec 17 % de la population (Warnier: 1993), représentent le plus grand groupe ethnique du Cameroun: ceux-ci vivent sur les hauts plateaux de l'Ouest où la densité dépasse les 150 habitants/km². Seulement, malgré leurs Origines communes, ces deux groupes ont rarement eu des relations chaleureuses (Fogui, 1990: 53-54 ; Champaud, 1983: 134-135). En outre, l'histoire des peuplements des chefferies bamiléké est émaillée des rivalités qui aujourd'hui, suscitent encore des querelles de clocher et des ambitions hégémoniques.

¹³⁰ On rencontre près de 20.000 dans le royaume sur la rive gauche de la rivière Mvi (arrondissement de Magba).

Unité culturelle et rivalités des chefferies bamiléké

Il est assez difficile de faire un récit exact et détaillé des origines bamiléké: celles-ci, ainsi que les périodes d'arrivée varient avec les différents sous-groupes. Les Bamiléké auraient également absorbés différentes vagues migratoires venant d'horizons divers, certaines du Nord, d'autres du Sud-Ouest et même du Sud-Est. En tant que peuple prolifique, ils ont pu assimiler les nouveaux venus, leur imposant leurs cultures et parfois même leurs langues (Su Neba, 1991 : 52).

Ils viennent pour la plupart de l'Adamaoua. Ils sont arrivés dans la région actuellement occupée par certaines tribus tikar traversant le haut Mbam. C'est sous la pression foulbé du XVII^e siècle qu'ils ont été obligés d'émigrer par vagues et à des périodes différentes vers le Sud. Ils ont atteint la région aujourd'hui occupée par les Bamoum et y ont résidé assez longtemps pour fonder des villages. Après une série de guerres menses contre les Bamoum, ils sont finalement repoussés de l'autre cote du Noun (du moins ceux qui peuplent le front des plateaux bamiléké) et avec le temps, forment des groupes dispersés qui aujourd'hui constituent quelques unes des chefferies de la région (Su Neba, 1991: 52). Elles présentent un mode d'organisation sociale spécifique que les émigrés bamiléké aujourd'hui réutilisent dans le contexte économique et contemporain où ils sont opérationnels.

Des dialectes apparentes

Les chefferies voisines se comprennent et il n'existe pas de lignes de rupture linguistique. Cependant, la distance introduit progressivement des difficultés de compréhension selon le schéma classique: A comprend B qui comprend C mais la communication devient difficile entre A et C. De la existence de nombreux dialectes à l'intérieur d'un ensemble linguistique qui englobe toutes les sociétés installées sur les plateaux bamiléké. Cet ensemble s'oppose d'une part aux langues bantoues plus méridionales des populations forestières et d'autre part au parler du Nord. Malcom Guthrie propose l'appellation de bantoides pour désigner ce groupe qui englobe aussi bien les Bamiléké que les Bamoum et autres Tikar (Barbier, 1977 a: 8).

Des chefferies aux traits généraux similaires

Au sommet de la chefferie se trouve le fo (chef) dont l'autorité s'exerce avec le concours d'un ensemble de dignitaires (les nkem) dont les uns sont héréditaires (les Kamveu) et les autres choisis dans la parents du fo (les Kuipeu, les Sop), dans la descendance des serviteurs (les Mwala, les Tsofo) et même pour service rendu dans la population ordinaire. Tous ces dignitaires se regroupent dans des pyramides d'associations au sein desquelles se fait leur initiation et se discutent les affaires de la chefferie. Les pouvoirs du chef s'exercent par l'intermédiaire de ces dignitaires et les fo demeurent extrêmement attaches au maintien de l'intégrité des chefferies. Ceci tient à la grande densité des populations qui manquent des terres et, au fait qu'en droit foncier, la terre est le bien collectif de la chefferie qu'il appartient au fo de préserver (Tardits, 1960:16-17; Barbier, 1977 a: 95 ; Champaud, 1983: 34-35 ; Hurault,1962).

Par ailleurs, l'entrée dans le système des titres de notabilités contrôlée par le fo est ouverte aux individus entreprenants et une forte mobilité sociale est encouragée à l'intérieur même de la chefferie puisque, le statut d'un individu est plus acquis ici par le travail et le mérite que donne par la naissance et le rang social des parents. L'Age et l'appartenance à un lignage n'étant pas suffisants pour situer un individu dans la hiérarchie sociale ce dernier aura donc intérêt à saisir les occasions d'enrichissement offertes à un moment donné par le contexte économique. Cette stratégie explique à notre avis la très grande sensibilité de ces populations aux grands courants commerciaux du XIX^e siècle et sa participation comme planteurs; commerçants à l'économie introduite par la colonisation (voir Miaffo et Warnier, 1993; Dongmo, 1981, IL ; Barbier, 1977 a, 1979; 1980).

Voilà qui explique pourquoi, même urbanisé, le Bamiléké participe à la vie de sa chefferie avec ce que cela suppose de présence physique aux associations et dépenses financières. Sa réussite sociale n'étant complète que si elle se solde par la détention d'un titre vénal, dans l'une des sociétés de notables. Il contribue, ce faisant, aux opérations de développement de sa région dont il a fréquemment l'initiative et au gré des voyages et d'échanges incessants, tout en y diffusant de nouvelles façons de manger, d'habiter et de se vêtir (Bayart,1989: 31 ; Barbier, 1979: 149 ; Miaffo et Warnier, 1993: 47), le Bamiléké ne se définissant que par sa chefferie d'origine.

Des chefferies rivales

S'il est vrai que "la conquête des populations les unes par les autres, la constitution d'empires ici et la auraient pu aboutir a la formation d'unités nationales vastes et stables comme en Europe ou ailleurs", il n'en demeure pas moins, comme le dit M. Fogui (1990: 111- 112), que loin de tendre vers la constitution des grands ensembles, la plupart de ces conflits aboutissaient a un résultat exactement oppose. Par exemple, il est significatif que la société bamiléké ait éclaté en une centaine de chefferies autonomes alors qu'elle bénéficiait de plusieurs atouts pour une perspective unitaire: identité de race, identité de religion, identité de tradition et de coutumes, etc.

Au contraire, ces chefferies connaissaient deux formes d'évolution qui empêchaient leur unification - vis-à-vis de l'extérieur leurs frontières se solidifiaient et se cristallisaient d'année en année a tel point que sauf conquête brutale, tout regroupement avec les chefferies voisines n'était guère envisageable. C'est d'ailleurs une véritable dédale de guerres intestines qui a finalement abouti à la stabilisation des chefferies. Bandjoun fut longtemps une chefferie conquérante et sous le règne de Fotso II, il groupait non seulement sa chefferie, mais au sud, Bangam-Fokam, Bandrefam, Bayangam; a l'ouest Bahouan, Bapa et Bandenkop. L'arrivée des Allemands mit fin a cette œuvre en rendant leur indépendance aux petits groupements (Delarozlere, 1950 : 14). Dans le même sens, Bana avait joué un rôle politique dominant au XIXe siècle si bien qu'elle fut choisie par les Allemands comme chefferie supérieure et siège d'un fort militaire en février 1910 a la fin de l'expédition Nkam-Noun. Ils entérinèrent même la conquête par celle-ci de Ndumla et de Bandounkassa. Banka fut également expansionnante et tout cela suscita des coalitions entre chefferies pour desserrer cet étai (Barbier, 1981, 1977 b : 21).

- A l'intérieur de chaque chefferie ensuite, il y avait un rapport de forces permanent entre le chef et ses fils ou certains grands notables; il arrivait ainsi qu'à l'occasion d'un litige, un prince ou un notable influent refuse la sentence prononcée par le chef, recrute des partisans et proclame souverain sur une partie du territoire fondant ainsi une nouvelle chefferie. L'hypothèse la plus courante était le mécontentement des princes qui n'avaient pu hériter du trône de leur père; ainsi

- les fondateurs des chefferies Bandjoun et Balengu sont partis de la chefferie Baleng;

- le fondateur de la chefferie Bayangam était le frère jumeau d'un des chefs de la dynastie Baham.

En outre, les querelles de limites ont toujours atteint en pays bamiléké une exceptionnelle violence et il était fréquent que les oppositions entre chefferies limitrophes aboutissent à des luttes armées avec invasion des terres voisines (Tardits, 1960 : 17). Les limites de chefferies sont généralement matérialisées par des tosses de plus de deux mètres profondeur aux endroits où sont apparus des litiges fonciers. (Barbier, 1984: 21). Plus récemment on a assisté à une escalade entre les populations Bangou et celles de Babouantou au sujet des limites de leurs chefferies. Ce litige a donné lieu au mois d'août 1995 à un arbitrage présidé par le Secrétaire d'Etat à l'administration territoriale assisté du gouverneur de la province de l'Ouest. Suite à cet incident, les récoltes des populations Bangou avaient été détruites par les populations de Babouantou.

Le souvenir de ces particularismes des chefferies héritées des guerres du XIXe siècle avait resurgi au détour de l'implantation des maquis upecistes comme aujourd'hui, dans la constitution des réseaux d'affaires ou lors des déroulements d'une partie de football (Bayart, 1989: 73).

C'est également un véritable "Code d'accès coutumier à la propriété foncière" qu'a élaboré le chef supérieur Bagangte pour l'acquisition des terres dans cette chefferie; projet dont l'objectif inavoué est l'expulsion des immigrés bamiléké non originaires de cette chefferie ainsi que l'a estimé le Journal Ouest Echos n° 15 du 07 Août 1995, le phénomène tendant d'ailleurs à se généraliser dans la province:

“Conflits intertribaux à Ouest”

- chasse aux Bamiléké dans le Noun
- expulsions programmées dans le Nde

“On connaissait les turpitudes du Sultan Mbombo Njoya à Foumbot. On connaît moins le plan machiavélique du chef Njimuluh Pokam a Bagangte. De Bandja à Bandjoun, de Bamendjida à Baham, l'explosion tribale peut provenir de partout. Le spectre rwandais plane sur l'Ouest” p. 1

Et Ben Ndiaye d'ajouter :

“Même si les auteurs de ce “Code” se défendant de vouloir livrer la chasse aux non-natifs du Nde, il reste que le vocabulaire relève peu du registra d’un “peuple hospitalier et fier de l’être”. Morceaux choisis : “Nos voisins proches ou lointains sont en train de s’emparer de nos terres à un rythme inquiétant (...). De partout, nous sommes en proie à l’invasion. Le plus grave est que c’est par la partie vitale, le Bagangte utile, que nous sommes attaqués : la région du Noun, Batoum, Bitchoua, Masso, Tchoundium, Nournga ... sont déjà entre des mains étrangères. Si nous laissons ainsi les autres s’emparer de nos terres fertiles, qu’est-ce qui nous restera si ce n’est pas la pauvreté; la misère et, au bout du compte la mort ?” Si cela n’est pas la xénophobie, cela y ressemble étrangement. Comme dirait l’autre, à chacun ses “alloènes” .

“Qui oserait encore jeter la pierre aux Bamoum, aux Béti, . aux Douala ou Mbo du Mungo? Xénophobes, sommes-nous en train de le devenir tous?” Ouest Echos n°15 du 07 Aout 1995: 7

Echange et opposition entre royaume Bamoum et chefferies bamiléké

La chefferie a souvent été assimilée au système étatique à partir d’une typologie d’Evans Pritchard et de Meyer Fortes (1964) laquelle ne distingue que deux types. Dans cette optique dualiste, la chefferie apparaît comme un royaume en réduction et le chef un roitelet. Cette typologie est vite apparue trop restreinte pour intégrer la diversité des systèmes politiques africains précoloniaux et on a proposé d’y ajouter un troisième terme: les sociétés à chefferie. Le pouvoir politique y est centralisé mais s’exerce sur un territoire et une population restreinte et ne donne pas naissance à un appareil administratif et politique développé (cour royale, administration territoriale, forces de répression, etc.). La chefferie apparaît comme une forme intermédiaire entre les sociétés “acéphales” et les Etats dans une optique évolutionniste. Or, l’histoire de l’Ouest du Cameroun montre que le passage de la chefferie au royaume (structure étatique), lorsqu’il s’est opéré comme dans le cas, s’est réalisé dans la violence et non à la suite d’une évolution inéluctable. Entre la chefferie et le royaume, nous sommes amenés à constater une rupture sociale et politique (Barbier, 1977 b : 19 ; Conac, 1979 : IX; voir Archie Mafeje, 1991; Peter Geschiere, 1975).

Naissance et évolution du royaume

Le royaume a été fondé vraisemblablement au XVII^e siècle par une poignée d'émigrants venus d'un royaume de la vallée supérieure du Mbam. Parvenu sur le plateau qui surplombe la vallée du Mbam, ce groupe dont quelques membres étaient apparentés à la dynastie régnant à Mbankim, lieu de départ de la migration, conquiert ou rallie des populations trouvées sur place. Un petit État fut fondé qui eut pour capitale l'actuelle ville de Fouban, s'étendant tout autour du chef-lieu dans un rayon variant de 20 à 30 km et occupant une surface approximative de 400 km² (Tardits, 1973 : 39). Pendant environ deux cents ans, neuf souverains se succèdent à la tête du pays dont la situation territoriale ne change pas. Dans la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, les, sous le règne de MBOUOMBOUO, repoussent les Peul venus de l'Adamaoua, guerroyent et portent leurs frontières au Noun et au Mbam, absorbant un effectif de population peut-être plus élevé que le leur. Le royaume s'étendit alors sur près de 8000 km² atteignant la taille qu'il conservera dans toute la suite de l'histoire (Tardits, 1973 : 39 ; Dubie, 1957 : 338 ; Champaud, 1972 : 327).

Donc, les réussirent à constituer un véritable royaume et ce passage se fit dans la violence car, une grande partie de la population n'accepta pas la domination brutale de ces derniers et préféra émigrer. Ce qui provoqua un vide démographique encore visible aujourd'hui. Les chefs conquis le furent dans une telle situation d'inégalité qu'ils perdirent la plupart de leurs fonctions et ne purent maintenir un minimum d'autonomie. Ils furent ravalés au rang de simples notables au profit de la noblesse royale et palatine (Barbier, 1977 b : 26).

Les rapports dialectiques entre royaume et chefferies Bamiléké

Comme le remarque M. Fogui (1990 : 54-55), les et les Bamiléké, malgré leurs origines communes, ont rarement eu des relations chaleureuses : "Le tempérament industriel et entreprenant" que plusieurs auteurs attribuent aux Bamiléké, leur mentalité acquisitive", leur expansionnisme (parfois agressif) ont longtemps constitué une menace pour les. De fait, ces deux groupes accusent des différences non négligeables : alors que les Bamiléké sont chrétiens ou animistes, les sont en majorité musulmans (80 %), avec une

fraction importante de protestants (13 %). Les Bamiléké affectionnent les activités commerciales et l'agriculture. Les sont surtout des artisans et agriculteurs.

En outre, au moment des grandes alliances politiques précédant l'Indépendance, alors que le pays bamiléké soutenait l'U.P.C. (Union des Populations du Cameroun) qui était en lutte ouverte contre le gouvernement, le pays apporta un large soutien au parti gouvernemental, l'U.C. (Union Camerounaise) dont le vice-président n'était autre qu'AROUNA NJOYA, cousin du Sultan, feu SEIDOU NJIMOLUH. Pendant l'élection présidentielle de 1992, le même scénario s'est reproduit à la seule différence que les accordaient leurs suffrages à l'U.D.C. (Union Démocratique du Cameroun) et les Bamiléké au S.D.F. (Social Democratic Front). Pour toutes ces raisons, et sans doute pour bien d'autres dont les guerres de conquêtes du XIXe siècle, l'aérosphère a été souvent tendue entre les Bamiléké et les.

Il fallut une intervention directe de l'administration coloniale pour que des implantations permanentes en vue de résorber la forte concentration démographique des Bamiléké sur les hauts plateaux de l'Ouest fussent réalisées. La première ne fut d'ailleurs qu'un demi-succès. Des villages de colonisation furent créés dans la rive gauche du Noun portant le nom des chefferies bamiléké d'où venaient ses habitants: Bangou IL, Bamendjou IL, Batoufam IL, etc. Ce fut un échec (un peu plus de deux mille personnes dans le canton en 1967 près de quarante ans après la création de cette zone de colonisation) ; les chefs y envoyaient des personnes qu'ils jugeaient indésirables dans leurs chefferies et voulaient contrôler étroitement ces villages annexes (Champaud, 1983 : 134).

Un peu plus réussie fut une colonisation plus diffuse et moins dirigée par l'administration dans l'actuel arrondissement de Kouoptamo parmi les espaces laissés vacants par les plantations européennes; mais, la encore, ce déplacement n'intéressa qu'un nombre relativement réduit d'individus. Mais il importe de mentionner la colonisation agricole de la région de Magba ou les Bamiléké peuplent plusieurs villages de la plaine tika : Magba, Ngoumso. Colonisation plus récente qui le fut avec l'appui d'un chef supérieur, membre de la famille royale (NJI POKASSA ADAMOU) qui voulait grossir la population dont il avait reçu la charge et développer son groupement (Champaud, 1983 : 134-135).

Le dernier incident sérieux entre les et les Bamiléké date de 1960: au mois de janvier, des "terroristes" venus du pays bamiléké avalent attaqué un village

de l'arrondissement de Kouoptamo; le lendemain près d'un millier de traversèrent le Noun et opérèrent des représailles dans le village et la chefferie de Bahlendjing; considérés comme le point de départ des agresseurs (Fogui, 1990 : 55).

Ces rivalités ont souvent été exploitées par les pouvoirs publics dans leur stratégie de captation mais surtout de contrôle de la province de l'Ouest par l'entremise des segments sociaux dominants de cette province (chefs traditionnels, hommes d'affaires, grands notables, parlementaires et autres leaders), contre le gré des cadets sociaux (voir Bayart, 1985: 233 et ss). "Processus d'assimilation des élites" qui a toujours été sans heurts majeurs dans le royaume où la vassalisation des cadets sociaux est séculaire au contraire des chefferies bamiléké en proie à des contradictions sociales génératrices de la déviance et de la fronde des cadets' sociaux. Car, ici la "périphérie" demeure "active" pour reprendre une expression chère à J. C. Barbier (1984).

Le Royaume, Pré Carre De Soutien Au Gouvernement Et La Fronde Des Chefferies Bamiléké

Les Bamiléké qui représentent 17 % de la population nationale, sont très versés dans l'accumulation productive et capitaliste (Geschiere, Konings, 1993) mais minés par l'exiguïté de l'espace vital, facteurs responsables de leur immigration (en général les cadets sociaux) ou souvent la collaboration avec les autres ethnies n'est pas de mise; Ce faisant, ils ont toujours constitué un peuple frondeur vis-à-vis des différents gouvernements au Cameroun. En face des Bamiléké, les, évalués à près de 350.000 âmes, donc faibles au plan démographique par rapport aux Bamiléké mais occupant près de 55,35 % du territoire de la province et se présentant suivant l'enjeu géopolitique de leur royaume comme "une variable intermédiaire entre les principaux acteurs politiques camerounais à travers coalitions et ententes" ainsi que le remarque ACHILLE MBEMBE (1993:345-377).

L'enjeu géopolitique du royaume (Mouiche, 1992 : 300 et 55.)

Le royaume de par sa position charnière se trouve être comme le cœur du Cameroun, lui-même "l'Afrique en miniature" : le royaume est musulman et chrétien, a subi trois systèmes de colonisation (allemande, anglaise et

française), il sépare le “Nord musulman”¹³¹ du “Sud chrétien et animiste”. Cette position stratégique, le royaume l’a pu assumer et ce n’est pas un hasard si Foumban fut choisie en 1961 pour abriter la conférence constitutionnelle qui aboutit à la Réunification. Déjà en 1958, le sénateur AROUNA NJOYA rappelait cette position charnière et d’avant-garde du royaume :

Nul n’ignore que c’est pour la première fois depuis la mise en place de nouvelles institutions, que le Chef du gouvernement visite le pays. Il en est de même de plusieurs ministres de son gouvernement. Ce n’est pas sans une foi profonde que nous constatons que malgré les lourdes et écrasantes responsabilités qu’il assume, le Premier Ministre (André Marle MBIDA) ait tenu à donner à Foumban le cinquième rang des régions jusqu’alors visitées. Nous ne pouvons mieux le remercier ainsi que tous les ministres, qu’en l’assurant de notre entière confiance, de notre désir de collaborer sincèrement avec le gouvernement en vue d’aider celui-ci à réussir ce qui a pu être appelé ‘la plus vaste expérience du siècle’. (NJOYA, 1959: 25-26)

Le royaume ainsi politiquement tourne vers le Nord-Cameroun, a été un bastion anti-upeciste au contraire des chefferies bamileké, artisan de la réunification (voir Gaillard, 1989, IL :30-31) et allié inconditionnel des régimes des Présidents Ahidjo et Biya sous la houlette de son chef en tant que pivot du système politique local. Cependant, ce système a connu des transformations structurelles qui ont suscité le lézardement du pouvoir notabiliaire local du Sultan.

¹³¹ Contrairement à l’idée communément admise, les musulmans ne représentent que 27 à 30 % de la population du Nord-Cameroun bien qu’ils exercent une hégémonie sur les non-musulmans. Mais avec les mutations sociopolitiques intervenues au Cameroun, cette hégémonie qui présentait d’ailleurs des limites est aujourd’hui en crise. Voir mon analyse sur “Ethnicité et pouvoir au Nord-Cameroun”. Papier présenté à la 8e Assemblée Générale du CODESRIA, Dakar 26 juin - 2 juillet 1995.

Le royaume comme allié gouvernemental

Tout est parti des élections législatives de 1946 où, contre son cousin Arouna Njoya, candidat de l'administration coloniale, le Sultan Seidou remporte les élections. Ce qui le rapproche de l'administration coloniale française dans sa chasse aux leaders; dès le début des années 50, l'U.P.C inquiète le colonisateur français par ses idées nationalistes et révolutionnaires et pour barrer la voie à ces "intoxicateurs", l'administration multiplia et soutint la création des groupuscules politiques pro-français dont l'Assemblée traditionnelle du peuple dirigée par le Sultan Seidou. C'est ainsi qu'aux élections à l'ATCAM (Assemblée territoriale du Cameroun) en 1953, celui-ci est élu député, seul candidat d'ailleurs avec plus de 2/3 des suffrages après que l'UPC ait été musclée, ses partisans battus y compris Um Nyobe venu pour battre campagne (Mouiche, 1992 : 204).

Ainsi que l'affirme Georges Chaffard (1962, IL : 355-356), "deux régions échappaient à la contagion upeciste: cène de Yaoundé, catholique homogène, fiefs du BDC (Bloc démocratique camerounais), celle du Nord musulmane, homogène où se survivent les structures traditionnelles encore peu perméables aux thèses progressistes d'Um Nyobe. Les Sultans du Nord font ouvertement cause commune avec l'administration contre les "communistes". Um lui-même au cours de ses tournées doit plusieurs fois affronter des adversaires hostiles, qui le conspuent au nom de l'islam. A Foumban, il est un jour malmené, assailli par des femmes ... ". Nous sommes là en pleines "provocations vulgaires" dont parle Abel Eyinga (1984 : 103) où il rapporte les persécutions dans les différents marches du royaume des partisans de l'UPC par les hommes du Sultan Seidou. Donc, l'UPC n'avait pas connu de bonheur dans le royaume entre autres raisons, à "Cause de l'administration coloniale française et ses deux têtes de pont, le Sultan Seidou et le sénateur Arouna Njoya dont le souci inavoué était de contrarier l'ascension fulgurante du "roturier" Félix Moumie (et président dudit parti) , ses origines modestes voire plébéiennes ne le prédestinant pas au commandement chez les, domaine des autorités traditionnelles (chefs, notables et dignitaires). À partir du moment où Ahidjo va arriver au pouvoir, il trouvera de solides soutiens en pays en la personne du Sultan Seidou et du Sénateur Arouna Njoya, lequel, après avoir été parlementaire français, fut nommé ministre d'Etat après l'indépendance, Il était également Vice-

président de l'U.C, parti du Président Ahidjo.¹³² Des ce moment, aucun parti ne foulera le sol et ravinement du monopartisme avec l'U.N.C. (Union Nationale Camerounaise) en 1966, puis R.D.P.C. (Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais) en 1985 ne vendra que consacrer une situation de fait. Mais depuis 1991, le royaume vit un multipartisme relatif avec l'emprise de l'U.D.C du Dr Adamou Ndam Njoya qui risquerait y être un parti ultra-dominant (Mouiche, 1992). Ce parti, après avoir flirté avec l'opposition dite 'radicale' dans le cadre de la Coordination des partis et associations s'en est désolidarisé après la Tripartite de 1991.¹³³ Il est aujourd'hui un parti 'modère', centriste distant vis-à-vis de l'opposition 'radicale' et du gouvernement.

Il importe également de relever le rôle joué par la royauté lors de la crise de 1983 entre Biya et Ahidjo qui avait permis de déjouer les manœuvres déstabilisatrices de ce dernier: en effet ulcéra suite à un remaniement du

¹³² Le Sultan Seidou en tant que pivot du système politique local a été successivement député aux Assemblées représentative, territoriale, législative et nationale du Cameroun, maire de Foumban de 1955 jusqu'à sa mort en 1992. Pendant longtemps, il a été Président de la Coopérative des planteurs de café arabica (C.P.R.C.A.) devenue Coopérative agricole des planteurs du Noun (CAPLANOUN) aujourd'hui en faillite et dissoute. Son fils et successeur Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya a également fait une longue carrière ministérielle, Mais le rôle politique de la royauté sur l'échiquier national a surtout été dans les coulisses depuis le soutien qu'elle apporta à l'UC, naissante d'Ahidjo.

¹³³ La Tripartite a été l'occasion la plus manifeste de l'expression de ces avatars des rivalités politiques-Bamiléké. En effet, la Déclaration de cette table ronde qui s'est déroulée du 30 octobre au 17 novembre 1991 avait été signée par quarante chefs de partis politiques dont Adamou Ndam Njoya, Samuel Eboua et Pierre Flambeau Ngayap. Seulement M. Adamou Ndam Njoya fut particulièrement pris à parti par une presse d'obédience bamiléké notamment Challenge Hebdo et La Nouvelle Expression sur fond de manipulation en vue d'accroître la popularité du SDF (Social Democratic Front), parti du leader Anglophone Ni John Fru Ndi mais très populaire chez les Bamiléké comme le fut jadis l'U.P.C.

Cette déclaration fut dénoncée par le S.D.F mais elle permit de décrier le climat socio-politique du Cameroun avec la fin des "villes mortes et désobéissance civile", le démantèlement des commandements opérationnels créés à l'époque par le pouvoir aux abois en vue de conjurer les troubles nés du multipartisme; le moratoire fiscal fut également accordé aux hommes d'affaires camerounais en majorité bamiléké,

gouvernement dont il n'avait pas été consulté, ce d'autant plus que ses hommes de main en avalent été écartés, M. Ahidjo convoqua tous les ministres nordistes maintenus au gouvernement, limoges ou nouveaux venus y compris le prince Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya (aujourd'hui roi) en vue d'une démission collective de nature à provoquer une crise ministérielle voire institutionnelle. Non seulement Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya refusa de signer la lettre de démission mais également il amena ses pairs exceptes le Premier Ministre Bouba Bello Maigari et le Ministre de la Défense Abdoulaye Maikano à lui emboîter le pas, "la colère étant mauvaise conseillère". Le Sultan Seidou essaya également de dissuader le Président Ahidjo de ne pas faire couler le sang (voir Gaillard, IL : 83 et SS.). Nous ne savons pas les conséquences imprévisibles de cette démission collective qui rappelle le scénario qui aboutit, en février 1958, à la chute d'André Marle Mbida et à l'arrivée au pouvoir de M. Ahidjo. En outre l'armée divisée en deux camps (ceux de Biya et d'Ahidjo) était en état d'alerte et Yaounde la capitale sous haute tension. Tous ces faits sont significatifs pour dire avec Claude Tardits que le palais royal est la matrice de la société.

Le royaume comme système de légitimation des autorités traditionnelles

La stratégie d'alliance entre le royaume bamoum et le pouvoir au Cameroun tire son origine dans le conflit qui a opposé le Sultan Njoya à l'administration coloniale française. Conflit qui aboutit à sa déposition et au démantèlement du royaume en 1924 et à son exil en 1931 à Yaoundé où il mourut en 1933. Pour restaurer le pouvoir royal, son successeur le Sultan Seidou s'était vu contraint d'adopter l'humilité envers son peuple mais surtout une collaboration sans faille, une subordination exemplaire vis-à-vis de l'administration. Par un revirement dialectique, il devint le numéro 1 sur l'échiquier politique locale pivot du système politique local bamoum voire son étoile diamantine. Des lors, il fut à jamais intégré dans le serait du pouvoir au Cameroun et bénéficia des prébendés du régime. En bon cacique, il se comporta de plus en plus comme le tribun des Bamoum et agent distributeur des ressources politiques locales du royaume. (voir Mouiche, 1992; Luc Sindjoun, 1994b:139-140).

Comme tout système, le système politique local bamoum privilégie donc une dimension du phénomène sociologique qui lui donne sa marque et le

caractérise: l'organisation politique traditionnelle (Nchouwat Njoya, 1971 : 10). C'est en outre un system consensuel des lors qu'il existe un degré d'accord suffisant entre les Bamoum sur ses règles de fonctionnement. Mais comme le dit Robert Dahl (1971: 341), "cet accord tend à n'être pas complet et de par sa nature même finit par se détériorer" pour se renouveler. Le consensus donc, loin de constituer un attribut statique et immuable des citoyens représente un élément variable d'un processus complexe plus ou moins continu.

Les facteurs qui servent de variables prédictives de la vie politique du royaume sont entre autres, la profonde légitimité du Sultan, quand même elle est en branle aujourd'hui¹³⁴, la fonction solidarisante de l'islam (voir Haruka Wazaki, 1992), le lien ethnique bamoum et l'imbrication entre le politique et la parents ; c'est aussi un system de tendance monopartiste. De fait, l'unité culturelle et linguistique du peuple bamoum est un input de soutien aux autorités traditionnelles a commencer par le roi tout comme l'islam qui concerne plus de 80% de fideles ici; la communauté islamique étant religieuse, politique, économique et sacerdotale.

Ensuite, la société bamoum est une société stratifiée ou les autorités traditionnelles occupent des positions de commande puisqu'une figure paternelle reste attachée à leurs rôles. Cette identification a pour effet de télescoper les degrés de parente et de ramener les relations de parente éloignées à un rapport de filiation. Et lorsque les Bamoum volent dans le roi ou les chefs de lignage des pères, ils ne recourent pas: a une rhétorique qui étend au domaine politique' un vocabulaire parental: ils affirment une relation vécue comme telle dans leur culture. L'imbrication des rôles parentaux et politiques est donc telle que tout effort analytique pour les dissocier devient un contresens sociologique (Tardits, 1973 : 43).

Enfin, le système politique local bamoum est un system de tendance monopartiste. Or, nous savons que le parti unique se réserve toujours le monopole de l'activité politique légitime en étouffant les velléités contestataires. Seuls ses membres ont le droit de participer à la concurrence pacifique pour l'exercice du pouvoir, à la définition du plan d'action du

¹³⁴ Jean Njoya dans sa thèse sur le pouvoir traditionnel en pays, tessère que la force de la royauté tient il ses capacités d'adaptation a l'environnement mouvant (Njoya, 1993).

gouvernement et à l'organisation de la collectivité tout entière (Ndi Mbarga, 1993: 36). Et dans un contexte d'assimilation des élites, les autorités traditionnelles dans le royaume bamoum ont toujours été investies aux consultations électorales non compétitives d'ailleurs et leur parrainage (en particulier celui du Sultan) a toujours été nécessaire pour toute promotion politico-administrative.

Tous ces facteurs ont pour effets pervers l'étroitesse de la classe politique du royaume bamoum monopolisée dans le temps et dans l'espace par les autorités traditionnelles; ce qui a pour conséquence la satellisation de l'espace sociopolitique par le Sultan et l'assujettissement des cadets sociaux. Néanmoins, le système politique local bamoum a connu des changements de structures (urbanisation, jeunesse, scolarisation, crise économique, communication, ouverture démocratique, etc.) qui ont donc détruit l'équilibre sociopolitique du royaume et fait des autorités traditionnelles et camerounaises en général des cibles désignées des populations. En outre, ont émergé des forces sociales nouvelles (à l'instar du leader de l'U.D.C, Adamou Ndam Njoya dans le royaume bamoum) dont la contre-dynamique a du renforcer les tendances dysfonctionnelles du système politique camerounais (Kontchou Kouomegni, 1984). Le "schisme tikar" et la pandémie de violence et de contestations qui a traversé le Royaume en 1991¹³⁵ en sont révélateurs et rappellent la fronde des chefferies bamileké.

¹³⁵ Pour la première fois en 1991, le royaume bascule dans l'opposition: en effet, lors des journées "révolutionnaires" des 22, 23 et 24 avril, sous l'impuissance du Sultan Seidou, le domicile de son futur successeur, le Ministre Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, le nouveau bâtiment de la préfecture de Foumban, les palais de justice de Foumban et Foubot, le service départemental des Affaires Sociales de Foumban, les prisons de Foumban et Foubot sont réduits en cendres. C'est le même scénario à Magba où les bâtiments de la Gendarmerie sont endommagés. Dans certaines localités, des barricades sont dressées et des ponts coupés. Enfin, la Maison du Parti au pouvoir soutenu par le Sultan, le R.D.P.C, est incendiée.

L'anomie et la fronde des chefferies bamiléké

Les sociétés bamiléké sont des sociétés hiérarchisées, inégalitaires dans lesquelles le succès d'une minorité d'hommes se paie aux dépens des cadets déshérités et de femmes engagées dans la production agricole (Miaffo et Warnier, 1993 : 47) et ce malaise social est à l'origine du comportement frondeur des cadets sociaux.

L'anomie des sociétés bamiléké

L'anomie est un état social caractérisé par l'incertitude, l'incohérence ou la transformation injustifiée des règles sociales qui sont ordinairement tenues pour légitimes et qui guident les conduites ainsi que les aspirations individuelles. Ce concept n'est pas exactement synonyme du concept durkheimien d'anormal ou de pathologique ni du concept de déviance. Le pathologique chez Emile Durkheim, comme chez Auguste Comte, signifie un dérèglement de l'état statistique et normatif par l'exagération ou l'affaiblissement d'un des facteurs composant le tout d'une société donnée. Lorsque Durkheim parle de suicide anémique, il s'agit d'un suicide qui se produit en cas de crise de l'ensemble social (par exemple, la crise économique). La déviance, terme américain aujourd'hui transposé en français signifie l'écart par rapport à la norme. La notion d'anomie mise en avant par Merton est à mi-chemin du sens durkheimien et de la notion de déviance. Elle est plus globale et se réfère à une situation vécue par des individus telle qu'il y a une disjonction entre les moyens à leur disposition et les fins poursuivies (J.Sumpf et M. Hugues, 1973: 22).

Les contradictions sociales des chefferies bamiléké ont été systématisées par Claude Tardits (1960 : 94), bien que ces analyses méritent aujourd'hui une certaine actualisation; il s'agit de la pauvreté des cadets sociaux, du prix élevé de la dot, des obligations fiscales, des conflits entre jeunes et vieilles générations, des exigences des fo et de la faiblesse des revenus provenant de la vente des produits locaux et de l'élevage auxquels il faut ajouter l'exigüité de l'espace vital.

De fait, le contexte historique bamiléké est tel que la stratification débouche sur une intensification de la production/distribution et une accumulation de type capitaliste. Cette accumulation est informée par un ethos de notabilité et par une idéologie rigoriste et morausante sanctionnée

par un arrière-monde religieux qui rappelle irrésistiblement la comparaison avec l'ascétisme calviniste cher à Max Weber. C'est la conjonction des circonstances historiques (stratification sociale, traite, conquête coloniale, avancée du marché mondial) et d'une configuration culturelle qui permet aux notables bamiléké (et non aux Bamiléké comme on l'entend dire trop souvent) de surfer au sommet de la vague (Miaffo et Warnier. 1993 : 68). D'ailleurs, dans le pays bamiléké en proie à de fortes densités démographiques, seuls quelques chefs et grands notables possèdent suffisamment des terres pour devenir sur place des planteurs. La plupart des chefs-de ménage doivent émigrer pour acquérir ce statut.

Plus grave est que le colonisateur se reposa ici dans l'ensemble sur les chefferies traditionnelles sans chercher à intervenir dans leur fonctionnement interne et instaura à leur avantage un système d'administration quasi-indirecte. Les chefs en profitèrent pour accroître leurs pouvoirs : ils eurent tendance à se détourner des vieilles associations qui constituaient autant de remparts coutumiers à leur autorité et à s'appuyer exclusivement sur des sociétés modernes et laïques qu'ils avaient eux-mêmes fondées et contrôlaient parfaitement. Cette évolution exaspéra d'autant plus la tension entre les chefs et notables d'une part et dépendants de l'autre que les premiers avaient à s'acquitter des habituelles et impopulaires tâches administratives. La culture du café s'étendit et enrichit outre les chefs, les notables (Bayart, 1985 : 27) aux dépens des cadets déjà défavorisés par les règles sociales en vigueur notamment les non héritiers que la régression du mariage sous 'nkap' en faveur du mariage dotal contraignait toujours plus nombreux à l'exil en vue de l'accumulation et donc de promotion sociale. L'U.P.C y trouva un contexte favorable pour la rébellion.

D'ailleurs, les émigrés les plus en vue, ceux qui ont le mieux réussi à l'extérieur reviennent souvent dans leur village d'origine, fréquentent assidûment le chef, lequel écoute leurs avis pour ce qui a trait aux relations avec les pouvoirs publics. Donc, contrairement aux autres ethnies qui connaissent depuis la scolarisation et la formation de ses élites une tension vive entre celles-ci et les autorités traditionnelles, en pays bamiléké après la guerre upeciste des années 60, on constate une collaboration étroite et particulièrement efficace puisque les chefferies ont retrouvé un souffle à l'étonnement de l'administration Territoriale qui croyait à leur extinction progressive.

Tous ces ressortissants qui constituent des multiples groupes dispersent dans tout le Sud du Cameroun, sont autant de groupes de pression au service des intérêts de leurs chefferies d'origine qui n'hésitent pas à intervenir auprès des services publics lorsqu'il le faut. Lobbies à caractère ethnique indéniable, ils actualisent les chefferies dans un nouveau champ économique et politique; des lors, le chef s'appuyant de plus en plus sur eux, apparaît comme le *président toujours vénère d'une association d'intérêt local, composée principalement par des émigrés qui, dans les affaires économiques au dans tes hautes sphères de l'appareil de l'Etat ont su faire preuve de leur compétence individuelle tout en maintenant une relation positive avec leur chefferie d'origine* (Barbier. 1984 : 27-28).

Bayart (1989: 208) a donc raison pour dire que cinq pratiques ont pendant longtemps semble fournir à la fabrication d'une classe dominante: l'idéologie, la chefferie, la bureaucratie, les élections et le parti (unique). Quand on sait l'alliance qui existe entre les chefs traditionnels, les hommes d'affaires, élites bamiléké et le pouvoir, la fronde des chefferies (ou mieux des sociétés) bamiléké ne peut être qu'une déviance des cadets sociaux victimes des abus de position dominante de ces aînés,

La fronde des cadets sociaux bamiléké

L'expansionnisme des Bamiléké leur vigueur démographique et le contrôle qu'ils exercent sur certains secteurs de l'économie urbaine¹³⁶ ont conduit à deux types de ressentiment, ainsi que le stigmatise Achille Mbembe (1993 : 345-377), responsables du comportement déviant et frondeur des cadets sociaux bamiléké et, par voie de conséquence, du dysfonctionnement du système politique camerounais:

- L'un découle de la crainte exprimée par les autres ethnies, de voir les Bamiléké asseoir définitivement leur hégémonie politique en usant

¹³⁶ - Suivant les statistiques de J.-P. Warnier qui reprend en les actualisant les thèses de Jean-Louis Dongmo (1981, IL : 143 et ss), les Bamiléké représentent 17 % de la population nationale, 58 % des Importateurs camerounais, 75 % des acheteurs de cacao; ils possèdent également 75 % des hôtels et 80 % des taxis de Douala et Yaounde, villes qui ne sont pas sur leur territoire, ainsi que la moitié des autocars du pays, J.P. Warnier : L'esprit d'entreprise au Cameroun, Paris, Karthala, 1993.

simultanément de la force du nombre, de leur puissance financière et de leurs capacités d'organisation et de discipline. Eu égard à cette crainte, ces ethnies (ou, du moins leurs élites) n'hésitent pas à se liguer ensemble, lorsqu'il faut, afin de leur barrer l'accès à l'Etat, c'est-à-dire aux diverses rentes (contrats, équipements, licences import-export, fraudes douanières, bourses, crédits, emplois, faveurs et libéralités) qui servent à bâtir l'essentiel des réseaux de patronage. C'est ce qu'Emmanuel Kengne Pokam (1986) appelle dans un ton raciste et belliciste "la mise en accusation de "l'entrepreneur camerounais", l'entrepreneur se ramenant à l'essentiel pour lui à l'homme bamiléké.¹³⁷ Mongo Béti (1993) parle du "*syndrome de réserve indienne*".

- L'autre forme de ressentiment est nourrie par les Bamiléké eux-mêmes, Elle se traduit par une frustration montante née d'un sentiment de persécution dont ils ont souvent fait l'objet, comme à Tombe en 1966 ou 236 furent assassinés par les populations Bakossi, et qui a été favorisée en 1991 par les flambées d'hostilité contre ceux que l'on appelle ici et là, les "allogènes" (migrants venus des provinces lointaines, boutiquiers, vendeurs à la sauvette originaires pour la plupart de l'Ouest, bref, la diaspora commerçante bamiléké dispersée dans les principaux centres urbains du pays). Cette tension est le résultat de l'intense spéculation foncière qui a accompagné les grandes migrations urbaines et rurales déclenchées depuis les années 20 par l'Etat colonial pour ses besoins de main-d'œuvre et accélérées sous le régime Ahidjo sous le couvert des politiques d'aménagement du territoire (voir Barbier, 1979). Elle est aussi le résultat des mesures de libéralisation politique intervenues à l'aube de la décennie 90 et le prolongement des luttes plus violentes depuis le milieu des années 80, du fait des politiques d'austérité et de l'aggravation des inégalités sociales.

¹³⁷ - On ne saurait expliquer le comportement économique des Bamiléké par le fait même qu'ils sont bamiléké car, être bamiléké ne signifie nullement posséder des qualités individuelles supérieures aux autres : vertu du travail, épargne, entraide, etc. Il s'agit d'une tautologie qui n'explique rien. En fait, le comportement socio-économique des Bamiléké ne renvoie pas à une essence ethnique mais à un type de société où la plupart des statuts sociaux ne sont pas donnés par la naissance mais acquis par des initiatives individuelles dans un contexte d'anomie généralisée.

Face à toutes ces péripéties et tribulations, la réaction des cadets sociaux bamiléké qui en sont les victimes de premier plan est de convertir les surfaces économiques et démographiques des Bamiléké en dividendes politiques. Nous n'en voulons pour preuve que la rébellion upeciste contre le régime Ahidjo et plus récemment l'opposition dite 'radicale' sous la bannière du S.D.F contre le régime Biya qui se sont soldées par des échecs encore plus douloureux, conséquences de "l'illusion héroïque" dont parle Michel Dobry (1992).

La rébellion upeciste qui s'inscrit dans le contexte des luttes anticoloniales fut très meurtrière avec près de trois milliers des victimes bamiléké (Richard Akoulouze, 1994: 261- 278; Richard Joseph, 1986). Mais le gouvernement Ahidjo ne se contenta pas comme le fit à peu près le pouvoir colonial de la répression. Il agit politiquement et économiquement¹³⁸. Les Bamiléké furent représentés à l'Assemblée Nationale et au gouvernement par des hommes courageux même si l'un d'eux, Pierre Ninyim Kamdem, fit double jeu. Kemayou Happi, Victor Kamga, Ninyim, Enock Katte Kwayep firent des tournées de pacification dans la région. Jusqu'à ce qu'il perde son siège de député aux élections de 1960, celui qui fut le premier Président de l'U.P.C, le chef Djoumessi Mathias était ministre - résident à Dschang (Gaillard, 1989, II: 24). Cette rébellion upeciste avait l'allure d'une jacquerie (Chaffard, 1962, II: 400) des lors qu'elle intéressait surtout les paysans et les jeunes qui manquaient des terres et travaillaient comme métayers au profit de notables souvent despotiques ou dégénères. Les villageois avaient été

¹³⁸ - Ainsi Paul Monthe, dirigeant du PSC fit significativement élu à la Présidence de la Chambre d'Agriculture en décembre 1961, deux décrets de Juillet et d'octobre 1961 accordèrent à l'U.C.C.A.O (Union Centrale des Coopératives Agricoles de l'Ouest à l'origine Union de coopératives de café arabica de l'Ouest) le monopole de l'usinage et de la commercialisation afin de relancer l'agriculture dans la région. Et les autorités fermaient les yeux sur la contrebande à laquelle se livraient certains commerçants avec le Cameroun Anglophone puis, après la Réunification, tolérèrent qu'ils s'enrichissent en profitant des droits de douanes moins élevés de l'Etat fédère Anglophone pour des marchandises destinées en réalité au Cameroun Oriental. Sur le terrain le gouvernement essayait de réaliser une révolution pacifique pour désamorcer la rébellion. Il attribuait le malaise à la Sous-administration. Le département bamiléké fut divisé en cinq plus petites entités en novembre 1960. De nouveaux districts furent créés. L'on annonça la démocratisation des chefferies et des communes (Bayart, 1985: 89-90).

persuades par les émissaires de l'UPC' exiles a Conakry qu'avec l'indépendance le moment était venu d'imposer la révolution agraire.

Contre le régime Biya, les enjeux sont d'ordre politico-économique. Comme nous l'avons vu, il existait entre M. Ahidjo et les Bamiléké un pacte non-écrit: il leur avait confié l'économie et en contrepartie, ils avaient laissé le champ politique aux autres. Aujourd'hui, se lamentent-ils, Biya a violé ce pacte. Car, en effet, dans sa tentative de faire surgir une bourgeoisie Bété susceptible de servir de socle à son régime et de faire contrepoids à l'emprise des Bamiléké sur d'importants secteurs de l'économie, M. Paul Biya s'était lancé entre 1983 et 1987 dans une entreprise d'octroi des crédits massifs à ses congénères. Au même moment, il dépouillait les réseaux bamiléké et foudroyait de la part des rentes qu'ils contrôlaient sous Ahidjo. Mais ayant désespéré de fomenter cette "nouvelle bourgeoisie", le régime s'était résolu à introduire le coup indo-pakistanaï dans la bergerie de l'économie camerounaise, menaçant ainsi de dessaisir les Bamiléké des positions qu'ils enlevèrent des les années 50 aux Grecs et aux Libanais dans le domaine de commerce de gros et d'exportation (MBEMBE, 1993 : 345- 377). Donc, avec la libéralisation politique on va revendiquer vainement la Conférence nationale souveraine, le départ de M. Biya et la démission du gouvernement dans le cadre de la Coordination des partis politiques et associations; suivront les 'villes mortes' et la 'désobéissance civile'; la Tripartite sera dénoncée et dans le cadre de l'Union pour le Changement, les Bamiléké soutiendront le S.D.F, en vue de battre M. Biya à l'élection présidentielle de 1992. Ce sera un échec, Néanmoins, outre les chefs, notables et autres élites, le gouvernement continue à composer avec les principaux hommes d'affaires bamiléké en rôles dans le R.D.P.C. (parti au pouvoir). C'est notamment le cas de MM. Tchanque (Président de la Chambre de Commerce), André Sohaing, Victor Fotso et Françoise Foning, tous membres du CRATRE (Cercle de Réflexion et d'Action pour le Triomphe du Renouveau) lobby créé à l'Ouest en vue de perpétuer et de faire triompher le mariage entre le pouvoir et les dominants sociaux de cette province comme le fut le F.P.U.P. (Front Populaire pour l'Unité et la Paix) dans le pays bamiléké centre l'U.P.C.

Cet épisode de la vie politique de l'Ouest au Cameroun nous replonge dans le débat sur l'Etat-nation au Cameroun. Que ce soit le slogan "d'unité nationale" cher à Ahidjo ou "d'intégration nationale" de Biya, le constat demeure sombre et amer, tant les exclusions se multiplient que des replis identitaires à base ethnique sont légion. Or, ce dont nous avons besoin

aujourd'hui c'est la "nation républicaine" dont parle le Professeur Maurice Kamto (1994: 224-234), c'est-à-dire "une construction administrative, un produit de la république fondée sur la citoyenneté, la liberté et l'égalité. Cette conception républicaine de la nation est éloignée de la conception "romantique et littéralement déchainée" qui a entraîné les dérives racistes et bellicistes notamment le délire meurtrier du national-socialisme hier" et aujourd'hui la tragédie rwandaise, yougoslave, voire burundaise. Pour ce faire, il faut d'une part une convivialité entre nos multiples ethnies, "l'inter ethnicité" pour reprendre Emmanuel AKIKA (1992 : VI) qui, pour être opérationnelle doit se fonder sur l'échange, la réciprocité, la reconnaissance et le respect de la différence entre les différents acteurs et groupes sociaux ; d'autre part, une ferme volonté étatique est nécessaire ; un Etat à la fois véritablement démocratique donc largement décentralisé aussi bien politiquement qu'administrativement, au plan économique que culturel mais un Etat fort, il même d'apporter des réponses adaptées aux défis de nombreuses forces centrifuges que renferment nos peuples (Moukoko Priso, 1994 : 35-46).

Et, si le régionalisme représente cette solidarité qui au niveau de la région englobe et laisse subsister les solidarités secondaires de groupe ethnique et de langue, la trajectoire singulière du royaume bamoum, des chefferies bamiléké mis en rapport avec l'Etat au Cameroun incline à quelques réserves (tant le royaume bamoum est politiquement orienté vers le Nord-Cameroun et culturellement sui generis, que les chefferies bamiléké sont plutôt tournées vers le Grassfield qui comprend le pays bamiléké et la région de Bamenda (province du Nord-Ouest); aussi la démocratie consociationnelle chère à Arendt Lijphart qui suppose un gouvernement de consensus (donc de tous les segments significatifs de la société), la protection des intérêts de la minorité contre la majorité, la règle de la proportionnalité dans la représentation politique et administrative et un haut degré d'autonomie à chaque groupe est-elle nécessaire ici et au Cameroun en général. On pourrait avoir un régionalisme avec un arrière-fond politique, culturel ou économique, etc... à condition d'en éviter les "mécanismes boomerang" dont parle Daniel C. Bach dans le cas nigérian (1989; 1991).

Et, comme il existe des "démocrates par conviction" et des "démocrates par contingence" (Guy Hermet, 1993), cela suppose pour être mis en branle au Cameroun des "hommes d'Etat" et non des "politiciens" (John. H. Hallowell, 1970:96-97). En fait, "l'homme d'Etat" diffère du politicien

ordinaire par le fait qu'il est capable de concevoir et de provoquer le soutien d'une politique qui est en fin de compte la plus favorable pour le plus grand nombre d'individus. Et aussi rare qu'il puisse être, il représente pour nous le politicien par excellence. Dans la mesure ou la vision du politicien ordinaire est poussée par des intérêts personnels restreints, réduits aux avantages d'un parti ou d'un groupe, il représente pour nous une faillite. Le rôle de "l'homme d'Etat" est d'être l'inspirateur d'action de valeur et dans notre contexte le promoteur de la "forme adaptée d'Etat" en phase avec la gouvernance démocratique.

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Regionalism: A Strategy For Self-Help, The Case Of Manyu Women In A Changing Society

Niger-Thomas Margaret

Most developing countries in the world today that enjoy some degree of social and economic development, depend on the people themselves, rather than governments, to initiate economic activities that would improve the quality of their lives. Evidence can be got from South East Asia, in countries like Korea or India where self - reliance has stimulated development. An example can be drawn from the micro-experience of Dalit Women and Social Change in India (Kananaikil 1990). The Bihar Dalit Vikas Samiti began as a small group of eight people but has today become a Dalit movement of more than 30,000 people. An important aspect of this movement is that it is managed by the Dalit people themselves. One of the basic principles on which the Samiti based its activities was that of self-reliance, the tendency to rely on one's own abilities and in this case, group dynamism. However several factors contribute differently in different places for such community-based approaches that make for grassroots empowerment and development. One of such factors has been regionalism.

The concept of regionalism has several connotations; the chambers' dictionary meaning refers to 'regional patriotism or particularism' -the love for the portion of land people have and live in as their region of origin be it forest, grass, rocky or sandy region. Spatial disparities give rise to regionalism. Regionalism could also mean the act of decentralisation of powers from a central body to local authorities whereby political and economic decisions are taken by the people of the area themselves. In this case central authorities only co-ordinate. While these definitions hold good for the theme of this paper, an added dimension of regionalism which will be used, is the tendency for people to cluster in little groupings, having a common factor of interest, be it political, economical, cultural, historical or otherwise.

The major concern of this paper is the economic dimension of regionalism which permits local governing bodies to develop economic projects, raise money locally or even internationally (with the sponsorship of

the central government) to fund projects. It also makes local inhabitants feel personally involved in economic and other development projects. Such personal involvement will mean greater participation and better chances for successful economic ventures. This aspect of regionalism will not be treated in isolation but will be related to the changing central state involvement in Cameroon and its impact on the society and on Manyu division in particular. As such I intend to argue that as the state becomes less of the centre of attraction, regional consciousness is reinforced in Manyu as self-help groups take the initiative to bring about grassroots development with or without support of the state. The particular case in view is the Manyu Women's Self-Reliance Foodstuff Cooperative Association and its networking based on regional affiliations. The questions to be addressed will therefore include the following :

- why did centralized development fail in Manyu?
- To what extent has the weakening of the state and the effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) motivated Manyu Women towards economic action at regional level (economic self - direction)?
- How will regionalism correct the errors of over centralization?

It must be mentioned that Manyu is a region that has witnessed a lot of economic and political fluctuations, from four different set-ups; the Germans, the British, the Independence era and the post Independence era which is accompanied by the introduction of SAPs and economic liberalization policies. However SAP, is just another change over time even though it can be considered a particular one in that its effect is felt all over the country as it has led to the weakening of the state. But different parts of the country are reacting differently to this ,change and so is Manyu. Meanwhile before dealing with the main issues of this paper, I will briefly review the socio-economic development of Manyu during the pre-Independence era as this gives an overview of the trend of economic development in this region.

Socio - Economic Development Of Mamfe Area (Manyu Division)

Manyu is one of the six divisions of the South West Province of Cameroon. It is the biggest division in the province in terms of land space with rugged terrain. It has a population of 21,5,484(1976 census). Manyu is bordered on the north and north west by Nigeria, on the east by the Western

highlands of the Bamenda grassfields and the newly created Lebialem division, and on the south by Meme division. It comprises four sub-administrative units, Eyumojock, Akwaya, Upper Banyang and Mamfe central which serves as the administrative centre. Geographically, Manyu is one of the most inaccessible regions in the province due to its difficult terrain and very poor road infrastructure. This accounts for very poor road connections between the centre and the periphery. Its dominant geographical feature is the Manyu river which is navigable by ordinary and steam boats. It is also hilly and forested, traversed by many rivers and streams.

When the Germans colonized Cameroon (1884), they divided it into 24 districts in, 1914. Amongst these districts was Ossidinge (Manyu division) with sub-posts like Asumbo and Nsarlakang. These posts influenced the district administratively, both politically and economically especially in trading. Some German firms were created after the Germans conquered Cameroon. These included the 'Gessellschaft Nord West Kamerun' (GNWK) founded in 1899, and was given a monopoly over an enormous area by the government. GNWK had the authority to trade in the central part of Kamerun. Ossidinge district and later Mamfe district too, were included in this area designed for trade by 'Gessellschaft Nord West Kamerun'. But the GNWK failed economically, so it lost its monopoly in about 1908.

The early European traders were interested in tropical goods like ivory, palm oil, rubber, palm kernel, spices and colourful feathers. In exchange they offered the natives cloth, trinkets, arms, gunpowder and liquor. Tropical hardwood was exploited as early as the German colonial period, but transportation costs limited its exploitation to places along the coast. So places like Mamfe division were least affected. Although Mamfe division has lots of wood like ebony and mahogany largely exploited in Cameroon since 1912, difficult topography and distance limited Mamfe division. Not until the 20th century (1980s and 90s) is the Mamfe divisional forest gradually opened up for timber exploitation.

Mamfe division had for long before colonisation enjoyed a fruitful trade with the Calabar (Nigeria) middlemen. The main direction of commercial trade that Mamfe controlled was from the highlands of the Bamileke and Bamenda through Banyang country and Ejagham in Mamfe division to Calabar. If Mamfe division experienced a boom in trade and economic development, in the 19th century, it was because Mamfe was a river port with a fruitful hinterland that served the Calabar port through the Cross river in

Nigeria. For its part, Mamfe (chief town for Mamfe division) was a river port and a cross road Junction town). It directed traffic to and from Nigeria, the Bamenda grassland region and Kombi. Apart from being a suitable gateway by land and river from Ikom and Calabar (Nigeria), to the hinterland of Bamenda grassland and other parts of the rain forest (Kombi), Mamfe town was also a trading centre as it had certain products that appealed to the European market. Some European trading companies had come to tap the produce of the area, as such a short-lived trade flourished in Mamfe town in the early part of the 20th century.

In 1922, the United African Company Limited (U A C) established in Mamfe division, with 'factories' at Nsanakang and Tali for buying kernels and palm oil. In 1928, the John Holt Company also set up 'factories' in Widikum and Mamfe town. These two companies did very little to develop the division apart from building houses for their senior staff members. Nevertheless, they provided wealth through trade, and the natives later invested in structural development. A few brick houses with corrugated iron sheets can still be seen in Mamfe Town today. A silk press opened by Dr. Mansfield in 1930 at Mamfe was later closed in 1932 by the European directors for technical reasons.

Apart from European companies, a few resident and visiting Okuni, Efik and Ibo (Nigerian) traders and canoe owners were also engaged in the Mamfe trade alongside with Banyang and Keaka (Cameroonians). As an entrepot town, Mamfe was a beehive of tertiary activities relating to marketing, transport and the sale of imported goods and primary products. As an advantage of the prosperous trade and its allied activities, the economy developed. Mamfe Town before Independence had tarred roads, a girls secondary school (Q R C) opened in 1956 and a number of primary schools. A number of government services and recreational facilities also existed in Mamfe division.

With the coming of Independence and reunification of West and East Cameroon, Manyu's political importance declined, being subsumed into a large nation state. Mamfe also experienced an economic decline as most of the foreign firms (John Holt, U A C) closed down. Other African traders, (Nigerian and Ghanaians) equally left the town. If the economy of Mamfe division declined immediately after Independence, it was because no meaningful economic activity substituted the transit trade that Mamfe conducted before Independence and a low level of economic development

has persisted throughout the post-Independence period. However, other forms of developmental interventions are visible.

Development Interventions In Manyu

The post-Independence era has experienced the creation of more government infrastructure in Manyu. More administrative units have been created as well as educational facilities, notably schools and colleges. There has been an increase in agricultural services and forest exploitation. A modern hospital has been built together a bridge across the Manyu River which now links Mamfe urban with Mamfe 'overside.' The primary road infrastructure has been expanded while communal work on peripheral roads has become the order of the day in some areas as the people themselves engage in developmental activities. Government has provided rural electricity to some villages. Mamfe town, the divisional headquarters, has been favoured with a telephone network system. Meanwhile, little or nothing has been done in terms of economic development infrastructure. Almost all existing projects have been of private sector initiative. The Nchang Oil Mill built by the Catholic mission is the only viable project. Despite these visible aspects of development, generally the socio-economic profile for Manyu according to most economic indicators reveals a low level of development. Several reasons account for the poor socio-economic development of the region.

The strategy of state consolidation by most African countries at Independence led to over centralization. The state as most authors have noted was seen as the economic focus, it was perceived as the centre of attraction and superior means of resource distribution, which also include the more symbolic resources of identity and legitimacy (Chazan 1989, Azarya 1988). With a state-centred approach, societies responded differently. In Cameroon the tendency was to integrate all ethnic groups within a region in the state apparatus through regional representations. While the state expanded its penetration to incorporate the periphery, individuals and groups sought for means of accumulation through state resources. This was the case in Manyu whereby regional interest was to a large extent blurred while a sense of individuality prevailed as will be discussed later. Within a unitary state, this approach of ethnic integration served for a superficial regional balance meanwhile regional diversities continued to persist.

The bureaucratic system of centralized administration which led to centralized development did not attract regional participation in Manyu. Rather it encouraged an elitist tendency of people clustering behind ethnic representatives for individual achievements. Cultural erosion also led to struggles, with elites desiring to be heads of villages. Moreover some strong and prosperous areas were almost secluded due to neglect or the absence of a political voice. As a result of blackmail some structures in the division were unsuitably sited.

Centralized development quite often is externally imposed and in most cases does not take into consideration local needs. Local inhabitants perceive it as development from above as they are not given the opportunity for personal involvement especially in decision-making. Moreover, officials who owe allegiance only to the centre that appoints and pays them, might not have the success of development projects at heart. In view of this, local needs were and are still neglected. Under the centralized system, it was necessary to exert a strong lobbying force which could bring economic projects to the division. Where this was lacking, the tendency was to accuse the central government of not making available projects to the division but rather vain and naked promises which never materialized.

The attitude of the Manyu people coupled with particularism also hindered socioeconomic development in the region while rendering centralized development ineffective. State centrality only helped to intensify this supposed attitude of individuality, especially as concerns the economic well-being of the region. Individuals and groups looked up to the state for general provisioning of the region, and there was hardly any real desire for joint ventures. Almost all efforts towards regional development failed. However, a few projects were realized at village level.

Despite the early 'trade contact, Manyu people have not been entrepreneurially directed as compared with some ethnic groups in the country. Even though a road junction, since Independence there have been no large scale enterprises. Huge trucks of goods from neighbouring Nigeria, through the Nfum borders pass to Bamenda and Kombi. It is interesting to note that a few small scale entrepreneurs may go to Bamenda or elsewhere to purchase goods that passed through Mamfe to major trading centres. Associated with the lack of indigenous initiative in economic development drive, is also the lack of an accessible periphery. Manyu is noted for its seasonal roads which are passable only in the dry seasons. Moreover it is a

good distance from the centre of economic activities in the country. It is therefore deprived of other factors that could promote its economic development.

Despite these limitations, and the failure of centralized development in Manyu, dramatic changes are taking place in Cameroon which seem to be having a positive effect on the socio-economic development of the region. Even though the effects of centralized development are still at work, important changes have taken place with regards to the political and economic conditions of the country. The economic crisis of the 80s has led to a contraction of the country's economy and thus to continuous adjustments. There have been reforms of administrative institutions and parastatals, and privatisation. This has led to a reduction of central state involvement. The democratic process in Cameroon just as in other African countries coincides with economic stagnation. While the state has sought for various forms of decentralization, people are increasingly clustering together for the purpose of self-help. Instead of relying solely on a state which no longer serves as the main resource distributor, there is an increasing tendency for individuals and groups to adopt a regional strategy and to bring about socio-economic development. In the section that follows, I introduce data on the Manyu Women's self-reliance Foodstuff Cooperative Association as a means of investigating the impact of regionalism on Manyu division.

Regional Self-Direction And Women's Economic Initiatives

Women's most observable contribution has always been to the household economy. But their roles have been known to extend beyond the household and labour market to a network of community relationships which vitally shape women's experiences. In Cameroon and elsewhere women have shown a marked preference for working in groups to solve their economic difficulties, provide infrastructure, and promote community solidarity. In the economic domain, women's groups often bring together women of all categories in society but more especially low - income households in urban and rural areas for the purpose of pooling their resources and initiating activities to generate incomes and productive employment, and meet the basic needs of their families.

The weakening of the state or the effects of structural adjustment programmes have not caused the formation of self-reliance groups in Manyu.

They have always been there. Groups made up of both men and women can be found in urban and rural areas even though the majority of self-reliance groups operate on the line of gender, and in this case women's groups are more prevalent. Most often these groups are organized primarily at local level, around a variety of concerns and for a variety of purposes. Some are basically social groups like the 'meetings', common in Cameroon. Others are meant for the purpose of generating savings and providing access to credit, the 'njangis or tontines'. Parochial concerns of interest to membership have often been the focus of most groups. However, some of these associations involve both men and women explicitly for community development purposes. Some of these contemporary groups can be considered an extension of 'traditional' women's groups or collective activities. Women's rotating labour groups, mutual-aid networks, rotating savings and credit associations and women age - set groups are known to have existed in pre-colonial and colonial periods. However, it has been observed that while contemporary women's groups definitely incorporate some of the activities of their predecessors and in some cases, clearly build on the history of previous forms of collective action, it would be mistaken to imagine that present day women's self-help groups are based on 'traditional' forms of mutual association and co-operation (Moore 1988). Today there are more economic opportunities to respond to.

Existing groups in Manyu have taken on new functions; more women and men alike are reviving group activities as a means of using new economic opportunities and roles. Women's cooperation makes it possible for them to receive capital assistance from government and private financial institutions to finance their projects or businesses. Liberalization has taken different forms in this region. There is a cooperative spirit growing alongside an individual entrepreneurial form. In 1994, the minister- representative of the area donated 500,000frs cfa. to a regional group of Manyu women who have taken the initiative to exploit salt from the Mbakang salt pond in the Eyumojock sub - division. Although this gesture may aim at winning political support at the grassroots, nevertheless, it encourages industrial production and stimulates entrepreneurial activities in the region.

There is an increasing sense of self-direction in Manyu brought about partly by a change of mentality and by the availability of funds and new economic possibilities. More than ever before people are seeking to specialize under economic liberalization and to carry out more regional production and

exportation of such products common in the area like 'garri' and (kasava farina) fruits. However, the vast majority of these collective activities in Cameroon remained unregistered until 1993, following the new law relating to cooperatives, common initiative groups, economic interest groups and associations. There has been an awakening of interest concerning these groups in recent years and more women are getting involved in self-sustaining as well as developmental projects both at village and regional levels. While their increasing prominence is partly as a result of the current economic crisis and structural adjustment policies, new forms of decentralization have however also fostered collective activities in Cameroon. This has particularly motivated self-reliance projects in Manyu division of which women have played a pivotal role in organizing cooperative networks from rural to urban centres.

Origin Of Manyu Women's Self-Reliance Foodstuff Cooperative Association (Mawsfcoop)

In March 1991, the Cameroon Opportunities Industrialization Centre (COIC) Buea organized a one-week Entrepreneurial Training Workshop in Mamfe. This workshop brought together hundreds of men and women, but mostly women from around the division. A majority of the participants were involved in varied forms of entrepreneurial activities. It was in the course of this workshop that some key participants notably group leaders, the director of the Women's House, the Delegate of Agriculture, the Delegate of Commerce and the technicians from COIC met in a working session to discuss the formation of a foodstuff cooperative in Manyu. I was one of the members in this session.

Meanwhile in 1990, ten of us, Manyu women had planned to start what we called "Manyu Women's Garri Cooperative". Some feasibility studies had already been carried out for this purpose. Within this same year Manyu men, mostly elites resident outside the region, launched the "Manyu Cassava Cooperative", meant to produce dry cassava chips for exportation. Realizing that both cooperatives were to make use of the same product, we thought it would be better to merge, considering the fact that while the men were distant from the source of production, the women would coordinate activities at the grassroots. Cassava is a women's crop, like most other food crops grown in the region. A few went on and carried out feasibility studies

for the cassava chips project' But by the end' of 1990, there were yet no results as to how the project was to be' coordinated and how both the men and women were to work together.

By 1991, the new cooperative idea from the COIC working group was immediately taken up considering the fact that five of the original members of the 1990 group were present. This time, rather than a mixed group, the women insisted on a single sex group. With the advice of the COIC technicians present, the fifteen members of the working group became foundation members of the Manyu Women's Self-Reliance Foodstuff Cooperative Association, but the men present had to register on behalf of their wives or mothers. A coordinating committee was elected and members paid a registration fee of 1000frs eta. This money was used for travelling to fifteen villages and around Mamfe urban to educate and sensitize the women population on the need for a joint cooperative venture. Regular meetings were held with other women apart from the fifteen members. Even though resistance was met, as some women were quite sceptical about the success of MAWSFCOOP due to the failure of other cooperative ventures like the' Women's oil cooperative, persistent education and action led to a change of mentality and MAWSFCOOP came into being.

Cooperative Networking

MAWSFCOOP operates as an intermediary organisation. Intermediary organizations typically operate at a national level, or in a region of a country and seek to attract resources and develop programs which can be implemented at local levels, usually by local groups linked to the intermediary. (Trager and Osinulu 1991). MAWSFCOOP comprises of both urban and rural women and its overall objectives are as follows:

1. to increase productivity, provide access to marketing facilities, and consequently improve the living standards of Manyu women;
- 2 to render foodstuff consumer services to members and the immediate communities of Manyu in particular and the entire nation at large;
3. to promote income generating activities and train rural women in relevant improved skills and management of small enterprises and thus enhance self-reliant development;
4. To improve on the economic level of the division while assisting in the socio-infrastructural development of the area; and
- 5 to associate itself with government aspiration to develop the enclaved rural areas in Manyu division.

It is registered as a producer/consumer foodstuff cooperative. Being a formally registered organisation, this has enabled it to attract external funds (e.g. from International donor agencies) that local women's group cannot contact. What makes it interesting to study is its effective linkages at all levels and its regional strategy. It runs a network of rural, semi-urban and urban women cooperators within and outside Manyu division. Three main village groups, Ossing, Kembong, and Besongabang in the Mamfe central and Eyumojock sub-divisions are involved. While operating as autonomous rural groups, these groups also serve as producers. Each group owns a farm in which cassava and other food products are cultivated. The semi-urban town of Mamfe serves as the cooperative headquarters coordinating all the activities of the members. Meanwhile, cooperative groups in the urban towns of Bamenda, Buea and Yaounde look for market links for MAWSFCOOP products. Cameroon has a large, diversified cooperative movement, but unlike most women cooperatives in the country which are limited to their immediate localities, this innovation of the Manyu women came about as a result of the need to dispose of excess food and in particular 'garri' (cassava farina), for better prices through the use of cooperative networks, and the need for micro-macro linkages which are vital for the socio-economic development of the region. Regional sentiments have played a major role in bringing women together, one main criterion for membership is to be born or married in Manyu division. It is believed that through regional affiliation, self-directed projects as well as other developmental activities are taken at heart. There is a sense of commitment which is also reflected in the way the association is organized.

Being a membership organisation, individuals pay 1000frs cfa to register and can buy shares at 10.000frs cfa per share. All members are expected to buy equal shares, and a total of 10 shares Within five years. This is meant to limit the disparity between urban and rural women and to give all members an equal say in cooperative activities. While women in the villages can also register as individuals, they are free to register as local groups which gives more rural women the chance of group participation and makes it easier to raise their shares. One major task of MAWSFCOOP is to make provision for sub-cooperative stores in the registered villages and to provide basic needs of the community which are only made available on periodic market days holding once a week in most villages. With the profit derived from cooperative activities, women are able to earn-extra income and improve on

their standard of living. Rural women who are members of MAWSFCOOP have a dual benefit in that rather than spending long hours in the market, they supply their food product directly to the cooperative for which they are paid immediately while they also share in the overall profits of the cooperative. An annual assembly brings together all cooperators who meet at the cooperative headquarters to take stock of its activities. Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that there is a board of directors of nine members resident within the cooperative headquarters and elected to manage the activities of the cooperative. They act as the negotiating body and channel through which the association can gain access to outside resources and assistance: both from the state and from other voluntary organizations. A supervisory committee of five members resident within and outside the division oversees the activities of the board of directors and the general welfare of MAWSFCOOP.

Since its inception, there has been a lot of progress in MAWSFCOOP activities and membership has increased greatly both within the rural and urban areas. Several factors account for this progress. Although women in this division are conversant with group activities, nevertheless this has always been limited to ordinary meetings mainly for cultural and social purposes, rotating labour associations and rotating savings and credit associations. Both men and women in Manyu, have often resisted joint economic ventures and this partly accounts for the low profile of economic development in the region. The people have been characterized by others, as self-centred or individualistic. However, the trends of events and the changing Cameroonian society has led to the changing attitudes of the Manyu people and women in particular, for more involvement in economic development. This does not only raise individual living standards but also improves the socio-economic development of the region. Another reason for the changing attitude is that rural women in the area have been continuously exploited by 'buyam sellam's, mostly Nigerians who buy very cheaply at periodic markets and inflate prices of food products in towns. Through cooperatives rural women can pool their food products together, especially those food items that are produced in large quantity in the area and are often in high demand both within Manyu division and other towns in the country.

This attitude of 'pooling together' within the region has for the first time made women's groups in the villages of Besongabang, Ntenako and Ossing beneficiaries of an agricultural scheme which has enabled them to purchase

grinding machines. These machines are used to grind cassava produced in the group's farms for the processing of garri, and also by individuals and non members within the villages and sometimes beyond, who pay for this service.

One of the outstanding features in the on-going democratic process and forms of decentralization in Cameroon which has enhanced regionalism and strengthened self-help activities has been the new legislation relating to Cooperatives, Common Initiative Groups and Economic interest Groups and Associations. As far as cooperative societies are concerned, a group of persons, at least seven in number, or corporate bodies are free to come together to achieve a common goal and manage an enterprise democratically. The new law allows for administrative, management and financial autonomy. There is no state intervention and organizations are exempted from company taxes. They are also permitted to receive gifts, legacies and subventions. Documents required for registration have been simplified, comprising of a stamped application, minutes of constituent general assembly meetings and the articles of association. Registration is done at the provincial registry of cooperatives and common initiative groups under the provincial delegation of Agriculture. No payments are required for registration. This form of decentralization makes it possible for many self-help groups to be formed and registered. This has revived many groups in Manyu and more groups than ever before are formally registered, as this gives them the status which enables them to receive external assistance.

Through its positive activities, MAWSFCOOP has benefitted from a World Bank Financial Scheme (FIMAC Loan Scheme) run by the Ministry of Agriculture. This has made it possible for the group to build a warehouse for storage and commercial purposes. Other self-help groups in Manyu have also benefitted from this scheme which encourages development projects at regional levels. Once a loan is granted, it remains within the region and revolves while generating more projects. Moreover, no interest is paid for Fimac loans. MAWSFCOOP has also received grants from a Swiss Association (Helvetas) and the United States Ambassador's Self-Help Fund. This external assistance has greatly fostered MAWSFCOOP activities and made an impact on the socio-economic development of the region.

However, despite the progress of MAWSFCOOP's activities, a lot is still to be done considering the vast landscape and difficult topography of the region. More forms of decentralization will empower the Manyu women towards alternative development strategies. Ikpi. (1989) remarks that one

characteristic of cooperatives is its “community spirit” through which rural communities ‘neglected’ by government have had to embark on rural development projects such as the establishment and operation of collective farms and produce marketing facilities and the installation and maintenance of local processing and storage facilities. While “community spirit” has been greatly motivated and lots of developmental activities are presently being carried out in Manyu, many enclaved areas are still very far from reach. Greater regional autonomy will make it possible for external resources to reach such areas. Because of the strengths and number of women groups in Manyu, cooperatives would seem an excellent way to increase women’s effectiveness in food production and marketing as well as obtaining access to financial services. Cooperatives have suffered, however, from a number of problems in Cameroon, including excessive government interference. Thanks to the new law which gives more autonomy to the movement while limiting the government’s role to one of registering cooperatives and monitoring the application of the law.

Conclusion

The concern of this paper has been to consider the Manyu experience of ‘Regional Balance and National Integration. In so doing the concept of Regionalism was highlighted as it seems to favour the present trend of change in Cameroon. I tried to situate Manyu within the pre-Independence and post-Independence era and to review the developmental interventions that have promoted regionalism in this division. I have also tried to show that through regional affiliations, Manyu women have been able to develop self-help groups which have emerged as a ‘push-force’ in a region with very low socio-economic development.

The paper points out that socio-economic development of the region in the colonial period was basically an affair of European colonizers and other immigrants with little participation from the Manyu people themselves. It further reveals that government approach of National Integration and centralized development has not been very productive in Manyu. Rather, the central tendency of national integration has been overwhelming as decision - making flows one way, from the governors to the governed, hence development projects have been externally imposed on local inhabitants who do not feel part of such projects. While National Integration centralized

development at the expense of the region, individuals looked up to the state for self-aggrandizement and general provisioning of the region. However, forms of decentralization have led to a more regional approach, thus enhancing self-help activities in Manyu.

The positive trend of Self-Help activities in Manyu reveal that rather than a state centred approach that makes for National Integration, and does not meet the aspiration of the regions, regionalism could be, an alternative strategy as it gives room for groups to express their ideas fully, and to develop the region with a particular concern. In this wise, development will take place faster when people are empowered at the regional level, and there will be less risk of loss of identity or interference. Greater regional autonomy will create a state of awareness, enhance local initiative, encourage greater specialisation and also evoke new developmental strategies while creating a feeling of belonging. Regionalism will provide sectoral development opportunities which make the regions more autonomous from the centre. This will enable regions like Manyu, which are rich in natural resources in various enclaved areas, to excel while strengthening community initiative.

Through regionalism, Manyu women will be provided with greater economic empowerment, and thus increase self-help activities and development of their local economic, potentials which are presently being inhibited by the centralized state of the government. The scope and impact of government intervention through the Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs (MINASCOF) in Manyu has remained modest, limited to the promotion of social welfare, rather than enhancement of women's self-reliance. Through regionalism, the broad mission of MINASCOF to mediate and coordinate effectively the interest of women in the program of relevant sector ministries, will be more effective and Manyu women will be able to take up their role more efficiently as actors in the developmental process.

With the decentralization of powers from the central body to local authorities, political and economic decisions will be taken by the people themselves. When people are empowered at the grassroots level of towns and villages, they will take the responsibility to work and improve their socio-economic circumstances and they will eventually elect leaders who are determined to help them do so. In other words, regionalism will enable people to more directly participate in the political process, and consequently, in their own social and economic development. Real National Integration will be achieved when every group has the opportunity to develop its own

resources with the assistance of the central government. By so doing regionalism will correct the errors of over-centralization and there will be:

- political self-determination
- grassroots economic development
- healthy competition and
- more efficient method of accountability.

Despite these advantages of regionalism, it should be mentioned that it has its problems also. The main one being the ethnicisation of politics. The issue for further research remains how regional autonomy could be combined with balancing relations at the national level.

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Appendixes

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This book presents a series of reflections by Cameroon scholars on a variety of topics associated with regional balance and national integration. The different reflections look for answers to some burning questions of the day such as: Where are we coming from? Where are we going? How are we going where we are going? Have the different state ideologies offered appropriate solutions to the quest for a strong, united, stable and prosperous nation-state? If not, what has gone wrong and why? What can be done to shape the future and accommodate the aspirations of the men and women of Cameroon and of their progeny? The book addresses the issue of national unity and national integration within the context of different political perceptions and visions. It examines the merits and demerits of the policy of regional balance of the Ahmadou Ahidjo years (1960-1982). Focus is also on the underlying flaws of this doctrine and philosophy. The debate also addresses some critical questions of the national integration policy and practices of Paul Biya, President since November 1982. The policy has failed to achieve its stated goals and has ended up in the ethnicisation and polarisation of national life. The future of the Cameroon nation-state, with its rich ethnic and cultural diversity, seems to be in jeopardy as internal forces question the management of civil society by leaders who have lost the sense of justice and equity. Why are there several voices singing the song of destitution and disappointment with the state? Have regionalism and the rhetoric of national integration and balance emerged as untenable policies within a nation-state in search of an identity and responsible leadership? These are some of the questions and issues Cameroonian and Cameroonist scholars have tried to address in this collection of 28 well-researched and outstandingly argued essays.

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